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From the Editor

Antivirus software will protect you from many threats, but it won't tell you when to uninstall programs that are now dangerously out of date, or are inherently unstable. Filling that gap is Jane Hoskyn, who in our Cover Feature reveals what you should remove to keep your PC healthy. If you have any suspect software installed, consider removing it now. If not, heed her advice to protect yourself in future.

Speaking of antivirus, many readers have asked me if we would be getting a reader offer for the 2016 version of Kaspersky's security software. I'm delighted to say that we are now selling it for the special price of £19.99, having negotiated a 50-per-cent discount especially



for *Computeractive* readers. Kaspersky remains our top recommendation, having won our past six Antivirus Megatests – nothing keeps you safer.

It's compatible with Windows 10 too, so it's an essential download for anyone running the new operating system. Please turn to page 68 for more details.

Daniel Booth
editor@computeractive.co.uk



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

£120

Price of Amazon's latest Paperwhite, our new favourite e-reader – **p28**



325%

Rise in 'malvertising' attacks last year – **p14**

330Mbps

Broadband speed of BT's new G.fast trial – **p49**

HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLS

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

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The Definitive Guide To Windows 10



Buy it now for £9.99
from www.snipca.com/17716

Despite problems, Windows 10 hits 75 million downloads

Microsoft has claimed that the launch of Windows 10 has been a huge success, despite thousands of users – including hundreds of *Computeractive* readers – reporting problems with the new operating system (OS).

The company had previously reported that 14 million computers had upgraded to Windows 10 within 24 hours of the OS launching on 29 July (www.snipca.com/17904). This figure had hit 75 million by the end of August, according to a new blog post by Yusuf Mehdi, Microsoft's Corporate Vice President of Marketing for Windows and Devices (www.snipca.com/17894).

When you consider that it took Microsoft six months to sell 100 million copies of Windows 8, it appears the company's strategy of making Windows 10 available as a free download for Windows 7 and 8 users is paying off.

Mehdi tweeted a series of facts about the popularity of Windows 10, including that the new OS was being used on



computers in 192 countries around the world, four short of the total.

He also claimed that around 90,000 different types of PCs and tablets had been upgraded to Windows 10 so far, including some computers that were made as far as back as 2007.

Windows 7 remains popular

Figures from technology analysts NetMarketShare appear to back up Microsoft's bullishness. They show that Windows 10 is already being used on more computers than

Apple's latest operating system, OS X Yosemite (version 10.10), which launched in October 2014. By the end of August Windows 10's market share had reached 5.2 per cent, compared with Yosemite's 4.8 per cent.

The figures (www.snipca.com/17895) suggest that more people are upgrading to Windows 10 directly from Windows 7, rather than from the more recent Windows 8. Since Windows 10 launched, Windows 7's market share has fallen further than Windows 8's – although at 57.7 per cent

COMMENT

After the failure of Windows 8, we don't blame Microsoft for getting a little excited by Windows 10's early popularity. But the company shouldn't pop too many champagne corks just yet. Millions of people would have downloaded Windows 10 simply because it's free, treating it as a trial of a new OS rather than a permanent switch. What Microsoft hasn't told us is how many users, exasperated by the numerous flaws and problems in Windows 10, have reverted to Windows 7 or 8 before the 30-day deadline.

it is still by far the most popular OS in the world.

Windows XP remains the second most popular, at 12 per cent, despite Microsoft ending support for it in April 2014.

Previously Microsoft said it aims to have Windows 10 installed on one billion devices by late summer 2018.

To reach that target, it will need to address the numerous problems users have suffered in the early days of Windows 10. *Computeractive* has received so many emails from readers having trouble using the OS that we're running a special series of 'problems fixed' features (see page 58).

REMEMBER, REMEMBER... WINDOWS 10 UPDATE IN NOVEMBER

The release of the first major Windows 10 update has been delayed a month to November, according to sources close to the company. Codenamed

'Threshold 2', an early version of the update is already available to people signed up to the Windows Insider Program (insider.windows.com).

The final version is being tipped to contain **extensions** for Microsoft's new browser Edge, and a messaging app for the Desktop.



You'll like this...

Google promises Chrome will no longer hog your PC's memory (www.snipca.com/17877)



...but not this

WH Smith customers hit by spam emails from other customers (www.snipca.com/17853)

Government wants you to access medical records on your phone

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt wants people to be able to view their full medical records on their smartphones within two years. His target is that one in four smartphone users will be able to access the NHS in some form by April 2017.

Hunt also said patients should be able to send information to GPs using their activity-monitoring devices such as the Fitbit (www.fitbit.com/uk), a wristband that counts how many steps the wearer takes.

The minister said all NHS patients would be able to view their entire medical records online by 2018. GP records, including appointments and blood tests, will be available from next year.

He said that empowering patients in this way would encourage them to take responsibility for their health and lifestyles.



He told the NHS England's annual conference: "The evidence from all over the world is that when patients start to access their medical records, they start to think about their health care in a different way".

But doctors' groups have concerns about confidentiality and patient safety. The British Medical Association (BMA) fears vulnerable patients with abusive partners could be

coerced into revealing their medical secrets.

Other doctors expressed concern that the notes they make in patients' files might now be revealed. For example, a doctor might have recorded that a smoker was at risk of cancer but had chosen not to tell the patient.

There are also worries that private companies might try to get hold of the data in medical records in order to sell drugs to patients, or otherwise exploit them.

As for Hunt's Fitbit plan, the Royal College of GPs warned that doctors are already overburdened with work and would not have time to analyse extra data sent to them by patients wearing the device.



Do you want access to your medical records via your phone? Let us know at letters@computeractive.co.uk

IN BRIEF

TYPE WITH YOUR VOICE IN GOOGLE DOCS

Google Docs now lets you 'type' using your voice. Once you've opened a document, click Tools at the top, then 'Voice typing', next to the microphone icon. A larger mic icon should now appear, with the words 'Click to speak'. Click this, and dictate what you want to appear in your document. Currently 'Voice typing' is available only in Chrome, as Google explains on its Support page: www.snipca.com/17869.

FACEBOOK LAUNCHES PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Facebook has started a trial of a personal-assistant service, which lets users ask people to carry out tasks for them. The scheme, which is being tested in San Francisco, is simply called M – it was previously codenamed Moneypenny (see 'What's All the Fuss About?', Issue 455). If your request isn't easy enough to be answered by artificial intelligence, a human will take over. Facebook says M can be used to "purchase items, get gifts delivered... and book restaurants".

Facebook conman faces three years in prison (he won't 'like' that)

Sanford Wallace, one of the internet's most prolific spammers and scam artists, has pleaded guilty to charges of fraud and criminal contempt after spamming millions of Facebook users with unsolicited messages.

Wallace (pictured) is due to be sentenced on 7 December, and faces up to three years of prison time and a fine of up to \$250,000 (around £160,000). This follows an unspecified plea deal, after he was arrested in Las Vegas in 2011 for breaking a court order.

The 47-year-old American – also known as 'Spamford Wallace' and the 'Spam King' – hacked into roughly half a million Facebook accounts,

using them to post links to malicious websites.

The sites would steal users' personal details and account credentials, before redirecting them to affiliate links that earned Wallace money.

The scam – which spanned five months in 2008 and 2009 – is estimated to have resulted in over 30 million spurious Facebook posts.

This resulted in a civil suit from Facebook, who were awarded over \$700 million in damages. Wallace was also ordered to stay off Facebook, a ruling he breached to earn him the current contempt charge.

These offences are the latest in a long and notorious career.



In the 1990s, his company Cyber Promotions was responsible for over 30 million spam emails a day. In 2007, he was also hit by a court order from social-network MySpace after he pulled a **phishing** stunt similar to his Facebook crimes.

Tomorrow's world

Microsoft Research has unveiled a new keyboard design that sees the Windows Start menu and other functions transferred to a letterbox-shaped **enlk** touchscreen that sits above the QWERTY keys. Called the DisplayCover, its functions include letting users open Desktop programs without having to access the regular Start menu or Taskbar. See a demonstration at www.snipca.com/17768.

IN BRIEF

CHROME BLOCKS FLASH ADVERTS

Chrome is now “pausing” some online adverts that are displayed using the Adobe Flash **plug-in**. Google, which runs Chrome, expressed concerns in a blog post in June (www.snipca.com/17804) about the effectiveness of Flash. From now Chrome will “intelligently” decide which Flash-based content you’re likely to prefer. Google says this will block adverts but not, videos (see also Protect Your Tech on page 14, and our Cover Feature on page 50).

GOOGLE MAPS POTHOLES

Google has patented GPS technology that uses sensors in cars to detect potholes and uneven surfaces. It could then show this info in Google Maps, helping you plot a smoother journey. Local authorities may also use the data to pinpoint roads in need of repair. Potholes are estimated to cost UK drivers £730 million a year in damage to their vehicles.

Asus launches world’s smallest Windows 10 PC

You may soon be able to run Windows 10 on your TV or monitor by plugging a small USB-shaped device into one of its **HDMI** slots.

Taiwanese company Asus unveiled the VivoStick in early September at IFA – the Berlin-based electronics trade show.

At 14cm long and 3.5cm wide, it’s the smallest PC running Windows 10 to be announced by any manufacturer. Intel’s Compute Stick (www.snipca.com/17841) is smaller, but it comes with Windows 8.1 – although this does mean it can be upgraded to Windows 10.

The VivoStick has 2GB of **RAM**, weighs just 68g and comes in blue, white or black. It has **802.11n** Wi-Fi built in, plus ports for **USB 2.0** and **USB 3.0**, and Bluetooth 4.0 for connecting a keyboard and mouse.

It’s the latest example of the current drive towards PC miniaturisation, most strikingly demonstrated in ‘PC-on-a-stick’ devices. Other



manufacturers to have launched ‘stick’ PCs include Lenovo (the Ideacentre Stick 300: www.snipca.com/17842) and Archos (unimaginatively called the PC Stick: www.snipca.com/17843).

Manufacturers like to hail them as revolutionary devices because they make it easier than ever to launch your operating system on any PC monitor and TV.

But experts have criticised their poor processing power. In our two-star review of the

Intel Compute Stick (Issue 456), we said it “struggles to load web pages and cope with demanding tasks”.

The VivoStick promises to be better because it contains the latest version of the Atom **processor**, called Cherry Trail, which is more powerful than the older Bay Trail processor in the Compute Stick.

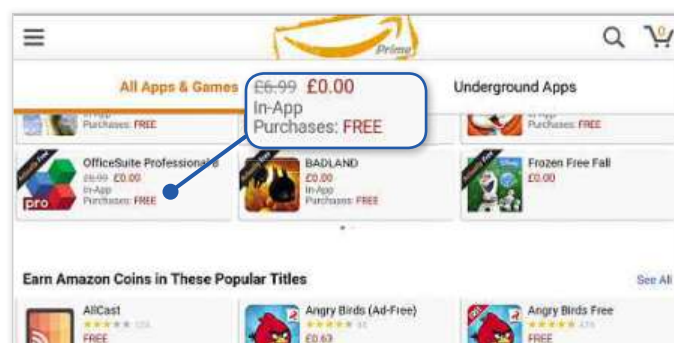
Asus hasn’t said when it will be available, but we do know it will cost \$129 (around £84). We will review it when it launches.

Fed up with hidden app fees? Amazon has the answer

In a surprising move, Amazon is offering to take on the cost of in-app purchases made on Android phones and tablets, removing some of the hidden fees you face after you install an app.

The company has launched Amazon Underground (www.amazon.co.uk/underground), a section of its App Store that lists only “100% free” apps. This includes many apps that ask you to pay for extra elements, such as new levels in games, or to unlock new tools in office apps.

Amazon says it can offer these for free because it has agreed a “new business



model” with app developers in which the company pays them an amount based on the number of minutes the apps are used. In return, the app developers have “waived their normal in-app fees”.

Typically, developers make

most of their money through in-app purchases, often luring you in by offering apps without an initial charge.

At the moment most of the apps in Amazon Underground are games, including Angry Birds. But there are a few

‘productivity’ apps available too, such as OfficeSuite Professional 8, which normally costs £6.99 (see screenshot).

All apps that are part of the scheme are marked with an “Actually Free” banner along the top left of the app’s icon.

In an open letter to its “customers” published on its website, Amazon stressed that it was “picking up” the fees hidden within apps to make them “simply free”.

It also pre-empted suspicions that the scheme will soon expire, saying it’s a “long-term program rather than a one-off promotion”.



Can you trust Windows 10 updates?

Only Microsoft knows what's in them, and they're not letting on...

Imagine owning a car that – according to the manufacturer – required constant maintenance. Every few weeks a mechanic pops round, opens the bonnet, fiddles around inside, then closes it again, saying “job done”. But when you ask what changes he's made, the mechanic smiles knowingly and replies, “sorry, can't tell you – but trust us, it'll make your car better”. Your heart beats a little faster the next time you start the car.

Welcome to the worrying world of Windows 10.

A few weeks before launching the operating system, Microsoft announced that updates would be installed automatically on PCs running the Home version. Microsoft is now treating its operating system as an ongoing service, rather than a one-off product, regularly updating it whether you like it or not.

“You have no way of knowing if a flaw in Windows 10 has been fixed”

Critics of this policy say that users should be allowed more control over updates. Those in favour think it's a necessary move to boost PC security, given the surprisingly high number of users who typically don't set updates to run automatically, leaving them at risk of attack. In turn, this increases the risk to others, because most **botnets** are powered by PCs running unsafe versions of Windows. But nobody expected

Microsoft to be so cagey about its updates. After releasing its second update on 11 August, which sent many PCs spinning into a seemingly endless ‘reboot loop’, Microsoft faced calls to explain what its updates contained. Its response was insultingly vague: “This update includes improvements to enhance the

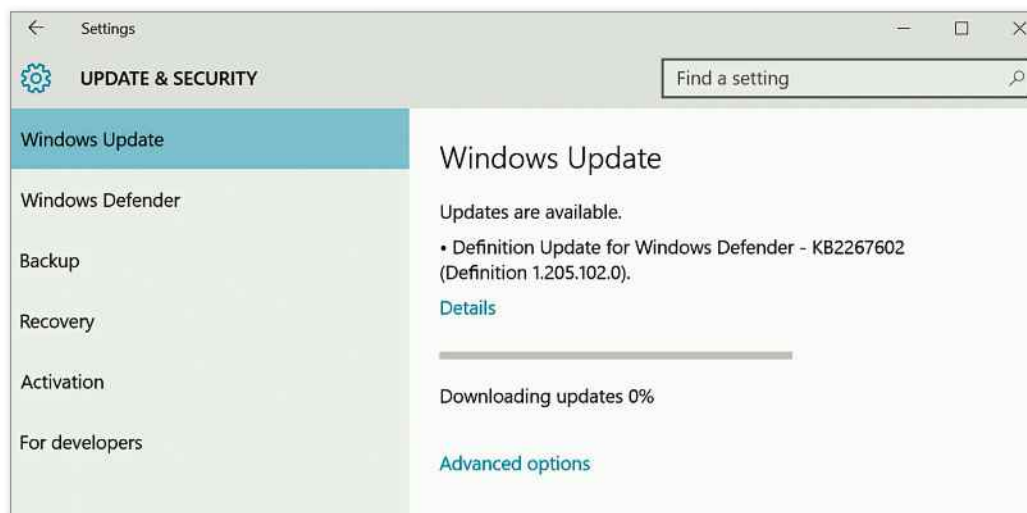
functionality of Windows 10”.

Microsoft expanded on this a few days later, after fixing the endless reboot problem with a third update. Speaking to the website The Register, the company announced: “Depending on the significance of the update and if it is bringing new functionality to Windows customers, we may choose to do additional promotion of new features as we deploy them”.

In other words, Microsoft will decide when an update warrants explanation. If you don't like it – tough.

This high-handed attitude is at odds with how many other software companies treat their users. Most developers explain what's new and what's been fixed in the latest version of a program (here's how CCleaner does it: www.snipca.com/17766). Microsoft is less forthcoming, simply listing on its support pages which files have been altered: www.snipca.com/17767. You can't find out what's in an update before it's installed, nor whether it will fix any bugs.

So why is Microsoft being so coy? There are several theories, none of which casts the company in a good light. Will the “enhancements” in each update help Microsoft access more of your data? Will Microsoft force you to pay extra for these features? And will updates mostly comprise fixes for problems caused by previous updates? It's easy to see why Microsoft would want



THE FACTS

- Microsoft says it will only explain the details of “significant” Windows 10 updates
- It released three updates in the first three weeks following Windows 10's launch on 29 July
- The second of these caused many PCs to get stuck into an endless ‘reboot loop’

to keep quiet about these.

Or perhaps it's part of a strategy to encourage you to spend £189.99 on the Pro version of Windows 10, which lets you defer updates. By doing so, you can wait and see how updates affect the PCs of Home users – though you'll have to install them eventually.

Only one thing is sure – *Computeractive* will examine every update and explain how to fix problems they cause. If the first few weeks are anything to go by, we are going to be kept very busy.

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind




Email: letters@computeractive.co.uk
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Twitter: [@ComputerActive](https://twitter.com/ComputerActive)
www.twitter.com/computeractive

Fools rush in to download Windows 10

 The saying is: 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread'. I regret to say I am that fool. I pressed a button and lo and behold I had Windows 10. Why oh why I did that I don't know. Windows 7 served me very well. I don't ask much from my computer – shopping, enquiring, email and playing Solitaire.

When the dog and I return from our morning walk, I share a digestive biscuit with him and play Solitaire for a while until my octogenarian legs recover. Windows 10 shows several games, including Solitaire, but I'm unable to download them. I have reverted to my Kindle Fire HDX for my relaxing game of Solitaire. Hopefully all will be resolved in good time.


Tony Whitelocke

 I share Clive Formby's loathing of adverts in the Windows 10 version of Solitaire (Letters, Issue 457). But as the owner of a new Android tablet, I thought there must be a version of the game I can play on it. There are lots to choose from, but I installed one from this URL (www.snipca.com/17773).

All seemed to be good, but then the dreaded adverts appeared! I should have guessed. If something is free these days, it must come with adverts. Like Clive, from now on I'll be playing Solitaire with real cards on a real table, with no commercial interruptions.

Alan Bracewell

Windows 10 'could have been a world-beater'

 Windows 10 is good, but it could have been so much better. Take Edge, for example. It won't download certain programs such as Paint.net because it says that it is not set up correctly. I have also noticed that some pages don't fit on my screen, and it's a real hassle to change the 'Top sites' to some of your own choice. I guess it's back to Chrome for me now, though with Incredible Start Page added (www.snipca.com/17742).

As for Cortana – this is madness, because it says it will work in the UK, but only if you use the US English language




option. So it seems that one of the big selling points of Windows 10 doesn't work here unless you're willing to put up with Americanisms. Bad show Windows. Most countries speak English, not American.

Email is easy to set up, but unfortunately there's nowhere to store emails you want to keep. I use several email accounts for different ventures, so I like to select the particular one that I am interested in at that time. I guess it's back to Thunderbird for me. I like the fact that you can send specific emails to folders in it.

It seems to me that Microsoft has focused on improving its own programs, but hasn't taken time to see what others are doing. Consequently, they've missed a golden opportunity to reign supreme. If they'd had the foresight to check why Chrome, Thunderbird and others are so popular, they may well have had a world-beater in Windows 10.

Roy Fomes

I will 'Percy Vere' with Windows 10


 I have upgraded to Windows 10 on two PCs and a laptop and, in the couple of weeks since these installations, I've become quite enamoured with Microsoft's latest offering.

All has not been without problems however. On one PC, Windows 10 installed correctly and then after a couple of days refused to start. The automatic reset option fixed this, but I did have to reinstall a number of programs which – in the initial installation – had transferred seamlessly from Windows 7.

On my laptop all seemed well, but then I lost the start function and the ability to use the search bar. This was fixed by creating a new user account for myself and then deleting the old one. Currently, on the same machine, Cortana has fled (it must have been something I said!) and I am trying to find it. Despite these minor hitches I love this new operating system, and me and my friend, Percy Vere, will stick with it.

Jim Beston

Goodbye IE, hello Chrome (sorry Edge)

 In Issue 457, you asked whether readers will switch from Internet Explorer to Edge. The answer, in my case, is that I *will* leave the bug-ridden IE behind, but not so I can use Edge. I don't care how good Microsoft's new browser is (and how can it be that good if you

Not all drone users are irresponsible

 Stuart Andrews' rant about drones (The Final Straw, Issue 456) is partly justified. Some "pilots" no doubt have nefarious or antisocial intentions. But many are professionals putting drones to good and legitimate use, and many others are model-aircraft enthusiasts who use them responsibly according to the CAA and BMFA (British Model Flying Association) rules. It's a pity that technology

has made their basic operation almost skill-less because it allows idiots to use them. It's likely that the abuse of drones by these fools will spoil it for responsible users. So let's harshly punish those of wilful neglect and criminal intent, license drones to professional users and registered model-aircraft sites, and as Stuart says, dust off our catapults for the rest of them.

Stuart Ord





can't use extensions on it?), I just don't want to risk using Windows 10 yet. Instead I have the perfect equation: Windows 7 + Chrome = fast, safe browsing.

Mal Jason

Not just kids - adults also have bad phone manners

✉ It's not just children who don't know how to behave with smartphones ('Kids with phones ruined my cinema trip', Issue 457). Adults can be inconsiderate and selfish too. My granddaughter's end-of-term show in July was ruined by parents standing up to record every moment on their phones. They seemed to get more pleasure from their phones than what their children were doing on stage.

Years ago, audiences at cinemas and in other public places used to be split into two groups – smoking and non-smoking. Maybe that's what we need today. Keep one half for the numbskulls who can't stop texting, talking and snapping, and the other half for those who know how to behave.

Roland Forster

Found - someone even stupider than YouTube idiots

✉ You claimed on the cover of Issue 457 to have found "the stupidest people on the internet", and reading Stuart Andrews' lament about pathetic YouTube dares I was inclined to agree. But then I read about someone wanted for armed burglary in Florida who taunted local police on their Facebook page (www.snipca.com/17757). The police responded, which led to it becoming a news story. More people then started looking for this idiot.

Eventually, he was captured, all because he couldn't stay off Facebook for more than five minutes. Is there a stupider person on the internet? I challenge *Computeractive* readers to find one.

Frank Castle

STAR LETTER

A good OS is like a football referee

✉ I was amused, and encouraged, by the letter from Keith Pearson ('Lukewarm about Windows 10', Issue 457), because his views reflected mine about Windows 8. It had its problems, but once I got someone to show me how to get rid of the annoying tiles in favour of my friendly Desktop, it was fine. I never understood all the fuss about the absent Start button, because I'd hardly ever used it for anything except switching off my PC. The icons on the Desktop and Taskbar had always enabled me to go to whatever program I wanted. I moved to Windows 8.1 not to get the Start button, but to have the latest version.

My biggest grumble about Windows 8 was its so-called facility to switch between what I was currently doing, and what I'd done immediately before, whenever my cursor came anywhere near the top-left corner of the screen. I endured a week or so of frustration as my work kept flying off the screen without warning, and then flew back



just as quickly (but I knew not how!). Once I found out how, I quickly got that "facility" disabled, too.

It strikes me that a good operating system should be like a good football referee – making things flow without being noticed. Surely it's only there to enable the things I use (Word, Excel, email, internet) to function, not to be the star of the show itself. I've moved to Windows 10 not because there's anything wrong with Windows 8, but just to be up to date. And I'm another stick-in-the mud who likes his computer to be silent – sorry Cortana!

Bill Cooper



The Star Letter writer wins a *Computeractive* mug!

Amazon is 'better than high-street shops'

✉ I see that it's open season on Amazon in the Letters pages of *Computeractive*. I have no great love for the company, but I use it a lot, and would like to point out a few home truths to people who moan about it.

Without Amazon (or something similar) we would be back to the situation we had to endure years ago, which is shoddy service in expensive high-street shops. In my younger days, before the internet, I used to dread shopping. Whenever I visit my local high street now, I see nothing has changed. The staff still can't force themselves to be enthusiastic. The prices are still absurdly high (unless you want to buy tat in the pound shops). And the shops are still badly designed. Sorry

Amazon haters, but the high-street will never win back customers until it learns how to treat them better. I foresee more closing-down sales in the future.

Bill Tydeman

PC won't start? No laughing matter

✉ You said in News (Tomorrow's World, Issue 457) that computers won't be able to write their own jokes any time soon. I beg to differ. My PC plays a joke on me every morning. It threatens to boot up, teases me with glimpses of my Desktop, then crashes. It does this three or four times, before launching properly. I

accept it's not a very funny joke. In fact, it's rather sadistic. My PC obviously has a black sense of humour. But I'll have the last laugh when I take it to the scrapyard and buy a new one.

Doreen Major



Consumeractive

Can I get my iPhone back from Carphone Warehouse?

Q My wife handed back her old iPhone 5 at a branch of Carphone Warehouse as part of a deal for a new phone contract. However, because she's not happy with the contract she cancelled it. But Carphone Warehouse won't return her iPhone, saying it's already been sent to the head office. Can you help?

Orlando Perfecto

A We doubt Orlando's wife Necita will get her original phone back. Phones that are traded in are usually sent away to be refurbished, in order to be resold. She may be entitled to a partial refund if she hasn't used the new phone, such as the price Carphone Warehouse would have paid her if she'd decided to sell it the iPhone 5. But if she's used the new phone, she may not get anything if Carphone Warehouse agreed to cancel the contract with no penalty.

She should check MoneySavingExpert's phone-recycling tool (www.snipca.com/17569) to see how much other companies are paying for second-hand phones, then ask Carphone Warehouse what it would have offered her for the iPhone. She may catch the company in a generous mood, in light of the goodwill it lost in the recent attack that saw the details of 2.4 million customers exposed to hackers.



How can I get Apple to unlock an inherited iPad?

Q Two years ago my brother died, leaving me an almost-new iPad. However, it's locked to his account and the passwords have been lost. Apple won't discuss my brother's personal information because of data-protection law, and it also says I need to show my brother's purchase receipt, even though my solicitor has written to the company explaining I'm now the legal owner. I don't want to access any data on the iPad; I just want it unlocked. Can you help?



unlock the iPad. But we think this was an inappropriate use of the act, which was primarily set up to restrict the US Government's access to data sent by computers owned by members of the public.

In the UK Apple is actually bound by the Data Protection Act, but this law only places a duty of care on Apple to protect "personal data" that can be used to identify a living individual. Although Apple's terms and conditions state: "You agree that your account is non-transferable and that any rights to your Apple ID or Content within your account terminate upon your death", George doesn't want access to his brother's account; he just wants the iPad unlocked.

As for a receipt, George only has to access his brother's bank account showing payment, which he can legally do as the will's executor. There's ample legal proof that George is now the legitimate owner, so we can't see any legal restrictions stopping Apple unlocking the iPad. We've explained this to the company, so we're hoping it will be more flexible than in the past.

George Main

A We'll try, because we don't believe Apple should block George's request on spurious legal grounds. But sadly this isn't the first time Apple has made life difficult for people in a similar situation to George. Last year, Apple refused Josh and Patrick Grant access to the iPad that had belonged to their mother, who had died of cancer (as reported in the *Daily Mail*: www.snipca.com/17676).

In that case, Apple gave the US Electronic Communications Privacy Act as the reason why it couldn't



Can AVG charge me to remove its software?

Q Last year, I used AVG's paid-for antivirus software on my computer, but I didn't renew my subscription. However, I can't uninstall it. Instead, a pop-up has appeared on my PC from AVG charging me £24.99 to uninstall it. Is AVG allowed to do this?

Mary Lou Wheeler

A A company can sell you anything providing it's a



legitimate service or product. However, there may be legal grounds to complain if it's not made clear when you buy it that you'll have to pay extra to stop using it. This would be considered misleading, and in most cases would nullify any contract between you and the retailer, so you wouldn't have to pay.

However, this alleged AVG fee is the first time we've heard this complaint, and the company has told us it

doesn't charge people to uninstall its security software. It does provide a removal tool if corrupt Registry entries make the software hard to uninstall, but this is free: www.snipca.com/17674.

AVG is as puzzled about what's going on as we are. It may be that Mary was the victim of a malicious advert trying to trick her into buying fake software. AVG wants anyone else who has seen this pop-up to contact it: www.avg.com/us-en/contacts.





✉ Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk

Write: Consumeractive, Computeractive, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD
Please include both your phone number and address.
Unfortunately, we can't reply to all your letters.

We stand up for your legal rights

Can you help track down a rogue debt-collection agency?

Q I'm owed £8,500 by a customer, so I looked online for a debt-collection agency to help me retrieve it. I found one called Lombard Legal Services (www.lombardlegal.com) and agreed a contract, paying the company £2,400. But they didn't collect the debt, and now they won't answer my emails or phone calls. Can you help?

Nigel Alberry

A We'll do our best, because we fear Nigel has been the victim of a scam. Sadly, many people fall for these online. You should always look online when you need a company to perform a service for you, but it's important to remember how easy it is for fraudsters to set up fake websites.

After some investigation, we uncovered worrying information about Lombard Legal Services (not to be confused with other companies using similar names).



Gryphon Property Partners, the company that manages the office building Lombard Legal Services gives as its London address, says it has never heard of the company. It also doesn't appear to be listed with Companies House, although two other companies with the same name are registered. We've not been able to contact the company by phone, or

using the online form.

There are other indications that all's not well. Sean Feast, a spokesman for the Credit Services Association, the trade body for debt-collection agencies (DCAs) told us: "No one should be parting with cash in advance to a DCA so alarm bells should have been ringing. Also he's been overcharged.

The most commission a

DCA will charge is 20 per cent of the amount you're owed, but usually only 10-12 per cent".

We've told Nigel to contact Action Fraud (www.actionfraud.police.uk) with this information. Hopefully, they will be able to investigate further.

CASE ONGOING

THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Tech companies' support forums

Acer

www.snipca.com/17631

Adobe

<https://forums.adobe.com>

Amazon

www.snipca.com/17624

Apple's products

<https://discussions.apple.com/welcome>

Avast

<https://forum.avast.com>

CCleaner

www.snipca.com/17629



Dell

<http://en.community.dell.com/support-forums>

eBay

www.snipca.com/17625

Firefox

www.snipca.com/17628

Google's services

www.snipca.com/17623

HP

www.snipca.com/17630

Internet Explorer

<http://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/ie>



Kaspersky

<http://forum.kaspersky.com>

Lenovo

<https://forums.lenovo.com>

LibreOffice

<http://libreofficeforum.org>

Linux Ubuntu

<http://ubuntuforums.org>

Microsoft Office

<http://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/office>

PayPal

www.snipca.com/17626



Skype

<http://community.skype.com>

VLC

<https://forum.videolan.org>

Windows 7, 8 and 10

<http://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/windows>

Yahoo

www.snipca.com/17627

Symantec (Norton)

<http://community.norton.com>

TP-Link

<http://forum.tp-link.com>



Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

The rise of malvertising

What happened?

A study found that people browsing the web are increasingly at risk of having their PCs infected by malicious adverts ('malvertising'). The warning came from California-based security company Cyphort, which said that instances of malware in online adverts more than tripled between June 2014 and February 2015.

Researchers made the claim after counting how many URLs among the 100,000 most popular (according to web analysis company Alexa: www.alexa.com) contained malicious adverts. The numbers weren't huge – just 407 in fact – but that still represents a 325-per-cent increase.

Cyphort curtailed the research in February when cyber-criminals started changing tactics to avoid detection.

There's been a surge in malvertising since, with some security experts expecting it to have reached new peaks in June and July. This was partly fuelled by a huge infestation of malicious adverts on Yahoo's websites, which lasted for a week. Criminals appeared to have targeted one of the numerous vulnerabilities in Adobe Flash (see Protect Your Tech, Issue 457).

With an estimated seven billion visits a month to Yahoo's home page, this represented one of the biggest malvertising attacks ever seen.

What you can do?

We would suggest you never click an online advert, but some malvertising attacks don't require you to do so – they can infect your PC by merely appearing on a website as you browse. And they're



not as easy to spot as the overtly fake image above.

One defence, as Cyphort notes, is to use an ad-blocking browser **extension**, such as the excellent Adblock Plus (<https://adblockplus.org>). These block malicious adverts, as well as legitimate ones, preventing your PC from being infected. For more advice on protecting yourself, and details about the increasing threat, download Cyphort's 'Rise of Malvertising' report: www.snipca.com/17755.

New tools

Registry Backup 3
www.snipca.com/17765

Tweaking the Windows Registry is one of the most delicate operations you can perform on your PC. Get it wrong and you could cause serious damage. Get it right, though, and you can unlock lots of superb functions.

We'll always suggest great (and safe) Registry hacks, but it's important you back up your Registry before making any changes, just to be on the safe side. One of our favourite free tools for the job – Registry Backup – has now been updated to include support for Windows 10.

Download it from the link above by clicking one of the download buttons (four are for a PC version, the other four are portable). After installing, it



will show you what's in your Registry (see screenshot), at which point you simply need to click the 'Backup Now' button. Whenever you need to recover the backed-up Registry, click the 'Restore Registry' tab at the top, select the backup you want to restore, then click 'Restore Now'.

ScamWatch

READERS WARN READERS

Targeted by courier scam

I've almost been caught out in the past by emails claiming to be from couriers. They ask you to confirm your identity so they can deliver a package. I buy a lot of stuff online, so I'm easy prey. The other day I got an email from a courier saying they were *collecting* a parcel from me. They were pretending to be Interparcel (a real courier). The fake email address was bounce@interparcel.com and it contained PDFs of 'shipping labels'. I was meant to print these and stick them to my parcels. I deleted it. Interparcel know about the scam: www.interparcel.com/news.php.

Margaret Bouldin



Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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SCREEN-LOCK TOOL

ScreenBlur

www.snipca.com/17878

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10



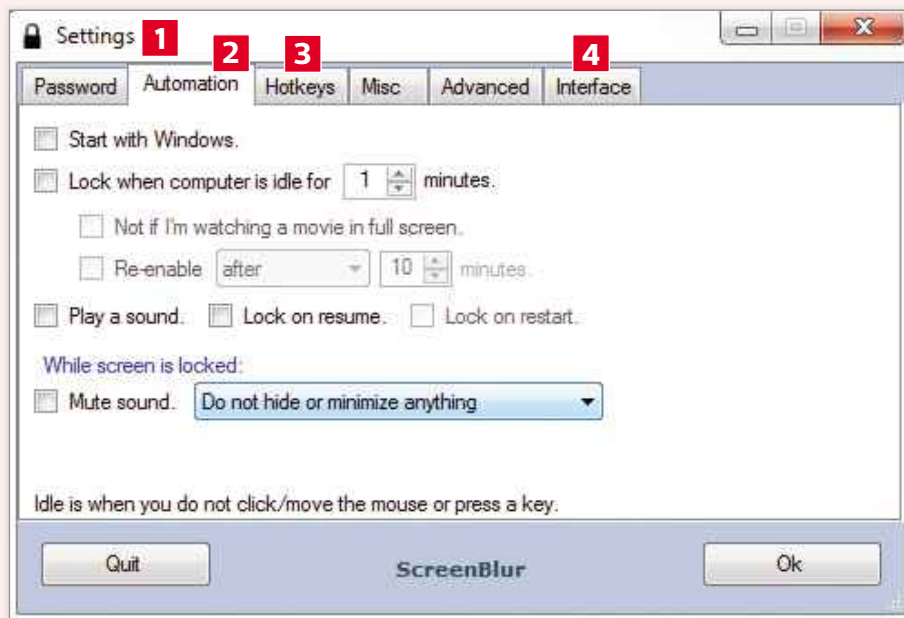
The idea of a lock screen is nothing new if you've got a phone and tablet – or if you use Windows 8, 8.1 or 10, all of which have built-in screen-freeze functions to shut out prying eyes. A tool like this is also vital if you live with kids or cats who like to play with or sit on your keyboard, deleting files and potentially murdering your PC as they do so, bless 'em.

ScreenBlur takes the basic screen-lock idea and turns it into a sophisticated tool with dozens of configuration options, some or all of which you can set to leap into action when you lock the screen. These will then remain locked until you enter your password.

For example, you can set the program to minimise all your running programs automatically and instantly – useful if you're busy designing your spouse's birthday card in Photoshop Elements and they suddenly enter the room. Other options include muting your PC's sound; hiding the Taskbar and Desktop icons; locking automatically when your PC goes into idle mode; displaying a certain photo or colour

when locked; and even changing the font. You can prevent the idle-mode lock being activated at certain times, such as when you're watching a film on your computer, or shut down your PC automatically if it's been locked for long enough.

ScreenBlur is a portable program so there's no installation wizard to endure, but you'll need to click through a few set-up screens before it's ready to go. Download, save and extract the ZIP, and then click the program file (ScreenBlur.exe) to run it. Click OK to use the default settings (Verdana as your lock-screen font, for example), then OK again to accept the terms and choose a password (make it memorable – see our feature in Issue 455 for tips). Once that's done, you can press Enter to lock the screen at any time and then unlock it using your password. To change your lock settings (see screenshot below) at any time, run the program, right-click the red lock icon in your system tray and click Settings. For lots of useful extra tips, see the discussion thread on the ScreenBlur website (www.snipca.com/17876).

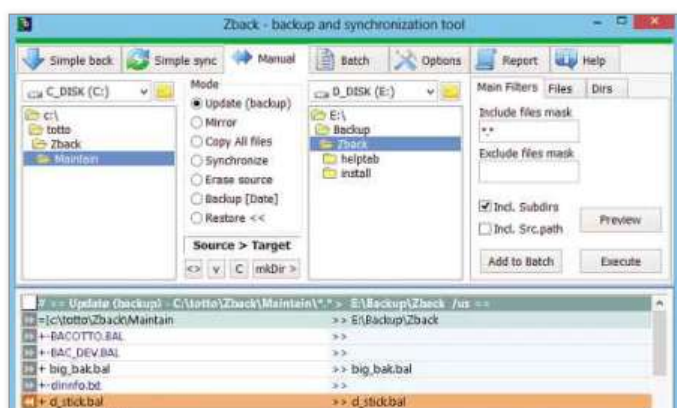


1 The Settings window lets you configure your lock screen at any time. Open it by running ScreenBlur and right-clicking the red padlock in your system tray.

2 Click Automation for options such as automatically locking the screen in idle mode, muting your PC's sound, and hiding Desktop icons and windows when locked.

3 Click Hotkeys to choose keyboard shortcuts for locking the screen, activating Desktop Blackout and – very usefully – opening the Settings window.

4 Click Interface to choose lock-screen photos, colours and fonts, plus lock types such as 'Access Denied' and 'Cat-Proof' (yes, this is an actual option).



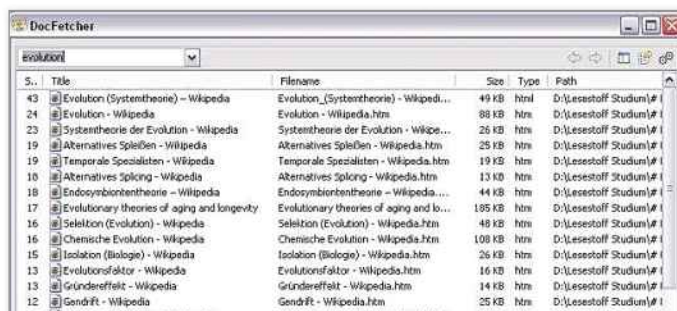
DATA BACKUP

Zback

www.snipca.com/17873

What you need: Windows 2000, XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10

One way *not* to back up your data is to use the horrendous junk program MyPC Backup, as mentioned in our Cover Feature (see page 56). There are many better, safer, free alternatives – and Zback is a great example. There is an installable version, but we prefer the portable version, which is only 550KB and can be run from a USB stick on any PC, right back to Windows 2000. Only download it using Windows 7 or later, though, for security reasons. Scroll down the page and click the first link under ‘Preferred downloads’, then save and extract the ZIP and run the program file. You then choose a source and destination folder, and opt to either sync or back up your chosen data.



SEARCH TOOL

DocFetcher

www.snipca.com/17875

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1

Windows’ built-in search tool isn’t exactly powerful or versatile. Until now our favourite alternative has been SwiftSearch (www.snipca.com/17882), which finds files extremely quickly because it skips the ‘indexing’ (file-collating) processes that Windows Search uses. New **open-source** program DocFetcher goes one better by not only letting you choose how much of your hard drive to index, so it finds files quickly, but also letting you open them from its program window. You can also use Google-style search modifiers like ‘and’, ‘or’ and ‘not’, as well as so-called fuzzy searches, which find similar matches to search keywords. It comes in installable and portable versions, both free.

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

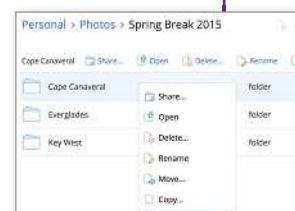
We tell you what software to use

What’s the best tool for sharing photos?

Q Please could you recommend a program, app or even a website – free or paid-for – that I can use for sharing photos with friends and family? I’d prefer not to be tied into services run by Apple, Microsoft and so on, and security is a high priority so I’d rather not just share my photos on public sites.

David Jagger

A Today’s most popular way to share photos is via Facebook. On the face of it, it’s definitely not what you’re looking for. However it does allow you to create private, secure albums that you can share with certain people (or just one person) only – as long as they are Facebook members. It’s the most convenient option, not to mention free, so is worth considering.



Flickr (www.flickr.com) is much more sophisticated and lets you share your photos in albums and sets, using templates you choose. It has many privacy options, so you can let anyone, certain people or no-one see your photos, add comments or even download them.

But we suspect your best option may be Dropbox (www.dropbox.com, see screenshot). You can use it entirely online (you can ‘Download the app’, as the homepage exhorts, but you don’t have to – though it will give you extra storage space for free) and it lets you create photo albums almost as gorgeous as those on Flickr (full instructions at www.snipca.com/17883). You can now share photos and albums with people who don’t have a Dropbox account (www.snipca.com/17884). You get 2GB storage space for free, and it’s £7.99 a month for 1TB, plus more sharing features. The Help Center (www.dropbox.com/help) is also excellent – another reason to use Dropbox for sharing your precious memories.



Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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Reviews

New products tested by our experts

PC | £1,036 from Scan www.snipca.com/17781

Scan 3XS Z170 Performance GTK6

A Windows 10 desktop PC with all the trimmings

It used to be a running joke among technology journalists that while Moore's Law (see www.snipca.com/17802) said everything would get twice as powerful every two years, Sod's Law said a decent PC would still cost £1,000. As quickly as hardware improved, software would demand more of it. You can pay less for a PC, but only if you compromised.

These days, you can get a great all-round PC for about £650, so that's progress. But what if you chose to spend £1,000 anyway? You'd get something like the Z170 Performance GTK6.

“It offers a powerful processor, high-quality hard drive and multiple connectors”

To start with, there's a powerful **quad-core** 3.5GHz Core i5 **processor** from Intel's new Skylake series, with a Turbo Boost speed of 3.9GHz. This has been **overclocked** to 4.6GHz, which means the PC has an extra cooling fan, but this is of high quality and therefore runs quietly. The result was exceptional performance in our multitasking and video-processing tests, which is good news if you need it for both everyday use and more ambitious work. For the sake of comparison, a 4.4GHz Core i7 system was only a tad quicker.

With such a powerful main processor, Scan might be forgiven for skimping on the **graphics card**. But instead you get the more-than-capable 4GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 970, which has also been overclocked. Again, that means additional cooling, but this is mostly silent and never annoyingly loud. You can easily play 3D games at high-quality settings

and up to **4K** resolution. That may not be so important if you never play games, but it means this PC will work for years without falling behind the needs of the latest multimedia software. A 256GB **SSD** is included to store Windows and your programs for high-speed access, plus there's a high-quality 1TB hard drive for the rest of your files.

Because Scan builds PCs to order, you can tweak most aspects before you buy. In our configuration, the two blank bays at the top of the case were filled with a DVD writer and a comprehensive memory card reader, featuring slots for just about every kind of memory stick you could think of, as well as two **USB 3.0** ports. There are two more USB 3.0 ports on the front, while two on the back support the even faster USB 3.1. You also get the tiny new **USB 3.1 Type-C**. This all adds to the sense of a PC that won't date quickly.

Inside, there are two empty memory slots, and the standard 8GB of DDR4 **RAM** can be increased right up to 64GB. There are three spare **SATA3** connectors for extra drives, two of which will fit inside the case, in addition to the DVD; and an M.2 slot for the fastest SSDs. Beside the graphics card are a fast **PCI-Express** x16 slot, a smaller PCI-E x1 and two standard PCI slots.

The only upgrade you might need to think about immediately is Wi-Fi, which

SPECIFICATIONS

3.5GHz Intel quad-core i5 6600K • 8GB memory • 256GB SSD • 1TB hard drive • Nvidia GeForce GTX 970 • 6x USB 3.0 ports • 2x USB 2.0 ports • Multiple memory card reader • Gigabit Ethernet port • DVI port • HDMI port • 3x DisplayPort • Windows 10 Home • 471x200x430mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/17781



isn't standard on most desktop PCs; options start at £16. If you do want to add or replace components later, Scan will do it for you under its three-year warranty: you just pay the cost of the parts and transporting the machine, and they cover the labour. The first year of the warranty is on-site, so if anything goes wrong an engineer will come out to fix it.

You don't have to spend a grand to get a usable desktop PC, but if you want one that's going to last for years to come and still be worth passing on to friends and family when you replace it, the Z170 makes the most of your money.

VERDICT: A great selection of components makes this PC as future-proof as you'd expect for this price



ALTERNATIVE: CCL Nebula 200i £700
If all-round performance appeals but you're not so bothered about expansion, this more modestly specified system includes a monitor, keyboard and mouse



LAPTOP-TABLET | £426 from PC Specialist www.snipca.com/17850

PC Specialist Sigma

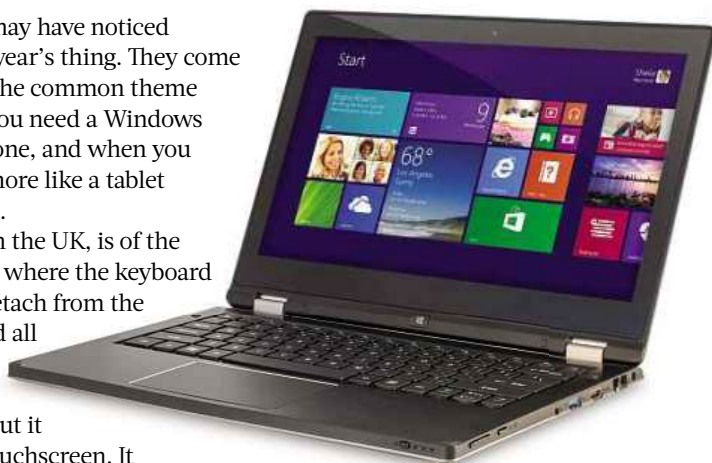
Yet another hybrid that just comes up short

Hybrids – as you may have noticed – are this year's thing. They come in various forms, the common theme being that when you need a Windows laptop you've got one, and when you want something more like a tablet you've got that too.

This one, built in the UK, is of the '360-degree' type, where the keyboard doesn't actually detach from the screen but can fold all the way around to the back, so you can forget about it and just use the touchscreen. It can also serve as a stand for the screen, in a tent-style configuration. That might make more sense, because folding up the Sigma doesn't reduce any of its 1.9kg bulk, which is more than four times the weight of an iPad Air 2.

“Its touchpad lags so badly that using it is like participating in a psychological experiment”

The Sigma has a **dual-core** Intel Core i3, not the most powerful PC **processor** out there, but comfortably above bargain-basement level. 4GB of memory and a 120GB **SSD** are not generous, but for a tablet-oriented device rather than a full-blown laptop, they're fine. Programs and web pages load quickly, and Windows 10 feels smooth. In our tests, the battery lasted just under four hours, which is



more laptop standard than tablet, but acceptable all the same. Because PC Specialist builds systems to order, you can customise many of the specifications.

The 13.3in touchscreen is bigger than any you'll find on a dedicated tablet and gives you a reasonably good Full HD display. Like the keyboard section, it's finished in basic black plastic, but not unpleasantly styled and with a smart brushed aluminium outer shell. Although the keyboard doesn't feel completely rigid, it gives plenty of **feedback** without being too noisy. Unfortunately, when you fold it back it remains responsive for a full three seconds, before the software takes note and turns it off, so you'll need to be careful or you may delete your music collection or email your photos to your boss with a few inadvertent keystrokes.

It's easy to think a keyboard and touchscreen should be enough, but in practice the natural way to use a Windows laptop is with the touchpad. Here the Sigma comes unstuck. Its touchpad lags so badly that using it is like participating in a psychological experiment. Sadly, there's no option to upgrade this to one that works properly, and it means the Sigma, though promising, just isn't rewarding enough to use.

SPECIFICATIONS

1.9GHz Intel Core i3 4030U processor • 4GB memory • 120GB SSD • 13.3in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 1x USB 3.0 • 2x USB 2.0 • HDMI • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • Windows 10 • 21x330x228mm (HxWxD) • 1.9kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/17850



HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which owns a hi-tech facility for testing the latest technology. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazines *PC Pro*, *Computer Shopper*, *Web User* and *Micro Mart* and the website Expert Reviews (www.expertreviews.co.uk). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

OUR AWARDS



We award every product that gets five stars our Buy It! stamp of approval. It means we were extremely impressed by the product, and we think you will be too.



Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Great Pick award. We highly recommend these products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

VERDICT: Although the Sigma looks and works fairly well, its touchpad is appallingly slow



ALTERNATIVE: HP Envy x360 £625

This comparable model has just been updated. We'll review it in our next issue, out Wednesday 30 September



Reviews

LAPTOP | £200 from Toshiba www.snipca.com/17851

Toshiba Satellite C40-C10K

A 'cloudbook' at an enticingly low price

As we mentioned recently (see our Toshiba Satellite Click Mini review, Issue 456): the netbook is back. Actually it never really went away, but it was so dull we all ignored it for a few years. Let's face it, the combination of a scaled-down laptop chassis, a tiny screen and an underpowered processor is not the stuff dreams are made of. Nobody, upon winning the lottery, immediately thought: 'Now I can get that netbook!'

“It's not a fully featured laptop, but it has a well proportioned screen and keyboard, and no major flaws”

Here's one, though, that's at least *trying* to impress. Finished in a classy hairline-grooved matt black, the C40 – which runs Windows 8.1 – has a larger screen than your average netbook; at 14 inches it's practically a proper laptop. You don't get any extra pixels, mind, just bigger ones, so the 1366x768-pixel display looks relatively coarse, and you still don't have enough resolution to use two windows comfortably side-by-side, unless one of them is something basic and preferably vertical, such as Twitter.

Looking on the bright side, text and icons don't look small and fiddly. The screen is glossy, which doesn't enhance its bog-standard colour reproduction, but does mean it's as likely to show you your own reflection as the spreadsheet you're working on. A matt screen would make a lot more sense for this kind of computer.



This isn't a touchscreen PC, so there's a built-in touchpad to move the cursor and carry out basic multi-touch gestures like two-finger scrolling. It worked fine for us. The keyboard is full-size – because it isn't limited by the dimensions of a small screen – and feels fine to type on. Along the sides you'll find one **USB 3.0** and two **USB 2.0** ports for peripherals, an **HDMI** socket to connect an external monitor, and an **SD card** reader. Wi-Fi is built in, although it's only of the single-band **802.11n** variety, not the faster **802.11ac**, and there's no **Ethernet** port for wired networking, although that's no surprise on a machine designed to be highly portable.

Since the whole point is that they're designed to be cheap, netbooks traditionally have processor chips that make a radiator thermostat look like the Met Office's new Cray supercomputer. Sure enough, the C40's 1.6GHz Celeron, with integrated Intel HD Graphics, is not fast. Yes, it can run basic programs and load web pages. But where we'd usually test a system's limits by seeing how high we could push the settings in advanced 3D games, here it's more about trying to apply filters to a few photos and realising we have to come back after a coffee.

Although its non-upgradable 2GB of memory is small, the C40 is quite capable of running software like Microsoft Office. Sadly, unlike rivals, it doesn't come with Office: you're left to shell out for your own Office 365 subscription (from £6 a month, www.snipca.com/17852) or pick a free alternative such as LibreOffice.

Don't think you can get a fully featured

laptop for £200. This is still definitely a netbook, but one with a comfortably proportioned screen and keyboard and no major flaws. Just keep in mind that with only 32GB of storage, the expectation is that you keep most of your work 'in the cloud' that is, on the internet – so it's more like a cloudbook than a netbook (see 'What's All the Fuss About?', Issue 457). You can of course double this storage via the SD card slot for under a tenner.

Celeron may be no great shakes as a performer, but it makes up for that by preserving your battery. Toshiba quotes the time between charges as 'up to' six hours 45 minutes. We played videos for half an hour longer than that, and in less media-intensive tasks the battery lasted even longer. Although it's on the large side, it's still reasonably light, and overall this makes it a great choice if portability is your main concern.

SPECIFICATIONS

1.6GHz Intel Celeron N3050 dual-core processor • 2GB memory • 32GB SSD • Intel HD Graphics • 14in 1366x768-pixel screen • 720p HD webcam • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4 • Windows 8.1 (free upgrade to Windows 10) • 23x344x245mm (HxWxD) • 1.7kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/17851

VERDICT: For £200, it's hard to fault the C40's style and quality



ALTERNATIVE: HP Stream 11 £170 Still our favourite successor to the netbook. It's much smaller but it comes with a year's Office 365



MONITOR | £339 from dabs.com www.snipca.com/17847

ViewSonic VX2475 Smhl-4K

A 4K monitor at an affordable price

There's no particular reason why a computer monitor should match the resolution of a TV picture. But at around the same time the television industry began the move to 4K resolution (also known as Ultra HD) the computer industry introduced the idea of Retina or HiDPI displays. And just as 4K offered twice the resolution across and down as the previous standard (1080p), HiDPI screens doubled the number of pixels.

So there was a natural fit, and, leaving aside Apple's decision to trump everyone with its 5K iMac, we're now seeing lots of 4K monitors. What they give you, apart from the chance to watch incredibly sharp TV programmes (once someone gets round to making them) is an incredibly sharp display. Of course, the first ones were also incredibly expensive – but that's changed. Here's the first one we've seen for under £350.

“A terrific display with some of the most vibrant colours we've ever seen”

Getting the price down this far is even more impressive when you consider just how many pixels we're talking about. At 3840x2160, the VX2475 illuminates more than eight million individual dots of light, 60 times a second. In our test images, the only thing we couldn't see was where ViewSonic had cut any corners. This a terrific display, with some of the most vibrant colours and deepest blacks we've seen from a monitor in ages.

A wide range of colours was faithfully represented, with the brightest blues and more fluorescent greens popping out of the screen. The intense backlight helps to kick everything up a notch. There's no super-glossy finish here. Instead, the VX2475 is matt, cutting out reflections and ensuring you can work without distraction in a brightly

lit room, not just when you turn the lights out to watch a film.

There is one catch: at 24 inches, this is one of the smallest 4K monitors. On the plus side, with 184 dots per inch, everything look amazingly sharp. It also means every dot is extremely small. If you use a Mac, that's not a problem, because Apple's OS X operating system (and most major programs) helpfully resizes windows, text labels and other visual elements to a legible size, while displaying your work and media in full resolution.

Windows – even several years into the HiDPI era – isn't so good at this. You can change how it scales objects. For example, when a window that would take up 400x400 pixels on a normal monitor still occupies 400x400 pixels (making it physically four times smaller), you would normally increase Windows' display scaling to 200 per cent, making everything the same size again. But not all programs respond well to this, and it still isn't as smart as Apple's method.

While ViewSonic hasn't skimped on the panel itself, the rest of the monitor is basic. The frame looks fairly cheap, with black glossy plastic. There's also no rotation or height adjustment; you just have to tilt the screen backwards and forwards slightly. Video



inputs are limited to two HDMI ports and one Mac-style DisplayPort. Remember to make sure your PC's video output supports 4K.

There's little advantage to playing games at Ultra HD resolutions on this size screen – you won't really see the extra detail, and unless your graphics card is top of the range, you'll end up turning quality settings down to show all those pixels. Nor is this the display for graphics pros. But if you want to watch 4K video from your new camcorder or see your DSLR photos in detail, or you have a Mac and want the best desktop OS X can show you, the VX2475 is an absolute bargain.

SPECIFICATIONS

24in IPS LCD • 3840x2160-pixel resolution • 2x HDMI ports • 1x DisplayPort • 3W stereo speakers • 435x566x231mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/17849

VERDICT: Cheap enough to make 4K tempting, but the size doesn't quite do it justice



ALTERNATIVE: BenQ GW2765HT £275 If you don't really need eight million pixels, spend less on a great 27in conventional screen like this



Reviews

PHONE | £160 from www.snipca.com/17762

Motorola Moto G (Gen 3)

New version of an old favourite

We've never tired of recommending the Moto G. It's always been a very affordable phone (even without a contract) with no significant compromises. If we were being picky, it could look a bit swankier and work a bit faster. Well, now it does. This third version is the best yet, and once again a contender for top Android phone under £200.

The Moto G (Gen 3) still has a removable rear shell, so you can change the colour if you tire of it or replace it if you smash it. Fine diagonal ridges make it easier to grip, and a curvier shape (thick in the middle, slim at the edges) makes the phone look and feel sturdy but fun.

“It's swankier and faster than before, with handy new features”

The case comes in white with a silver frame or all black, and the rear shell in black, white or any of seven colours. That's technically a whole rainbow. If you go to Motorola's website (www.snipca.com/17763) and pay £179 for the phone (about £20 more than shops charge), you can customise the colours and engrave your name on the back.

An **IPX7** rating means the phone can safely be dropped in water and fished out again. It's still not guaranteed to survive the washing machine, but you can browse the web in the bath without fear of drowning your phone. And you can take pictures underwater. Preferably not in the bath.

Another option is doubling the built-in storage to 16GB. We wouldn't pay the £30 for that, because 16GB (minus 4GB for the Android 5.1 operating system) isn't enough to store that many apps, videos and photos.



For less than a tenner you could buy a standard 32GB card for the Moto G's **microSD** slot. This upgrade also doubles the **RAM** to 2GB, which makes the device feel a lot snappier than previous models.

We tested the 2GB/16GB version. The **quad-core** 1.4GHz Snapdragon **processor** is certainly more nippy than the 1.2GHz version in a lot of budget phones and about a third faster than its predecessor. What it still can't do is run advanced 3D games smoothly – you'll just need a more expensive phone for that. More basic games work fine, however.

More performance doesn't mean less battery life. We got just over 11 hours of video-watching (90 minutes more than the previous Moto G) and towards the top of the range for this price bracket. The Moto G's 5in screen was always a strong point, and its specs haven't changed. It's not as sharp or vibrant as the best, but very good nonetheless, and the colour calibration seems to have been improved, though it doesn't quite go bright enough for effective use on sunny days.

That just leaves the camera, which takes a leap up from eight to 13 **megapixels**. We got lots of detail, accurate exposure (plus a darken/lighten control) and good colour balance. Indoors, the two-tone flash is supposed to make colours more natural. We weren't convinced, but even

without it, the Moto G (Gen 3) coped quite well with low light.

Again, Motorola has installed the very latest version of Android and resisted the temptation to muck about with it. Where there are special features, they tend to be handy – like the ability to turn on silent mode whenever you're in a particular place, or the option to keep the time displayed when the phone is idle.

There's a lot more competition in the budget-phone market nowadays, and for this money, an even better processor and screen wouldn't have gone amiss. But this is still one of our favourite smartphones.

SPECIFICATIONS

Android 5.1 (Lollipop) • 5in 1280x720-pixel screen • 13-megapixel rear camera • 5-megapixel front camera • 8GB flash storage • MicroSD card slot • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 3G/4G • 142x72x6.1mm (HxWxD) • 155g • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/17764

VERDICT: It's a shame the cheapest version skimps on memory, but this is a great phone at a reasonable price

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Vodafone Smart Ultra 6 **£125** If the network suits you, this has a higher-resolution (though duller) screen and twice the storage for less money



TABLET | £200 from EE www.snipca.com/17777

EE Harrier Tab

A tablet that can get online anywhere



EE is a mobile network, and the reason it wants to sell you a tablet at a reasonable price is to get you to spend more on a data tariff. Most people buy a tablet with Wi-Fi only, for when you're at home or near a hotspot. But if you want to get online almost anywhere, the Harrier Tab connects to EE's 3G/4G network.

You can buy it for just £30 if you sign up for a two-year contract, at £16 a month for 2GB of data or £18 for 10GB. With 10GB a month, you could watch BBC iPlayer for a couple of hours a day, although downloading HD movies from Google Play would gobble up data at a much faster rate. If you only need occasional mobile access for basic tasks like email, pay-as-you-go would make more sense. That means paying £200 up front then £10 per 2GB.

Either way, the Harrier Tab comes locked to EE. But it only costs £8.99 to unlock it for use on other networks, and on pay-as-you-go you can do this at any time. On contract, you have to wait until your 24 months are up.

So much for payment options, but what's the Harrier Tab like? The brushed metal effect doesn't disguise its plastic case. At 8in, its screen is a similar size to the iPad mini, with the same narrow bezel at each side, though its widescreen format makes it longer. It's also slightly lighter. The screen isn't particularly sharp or vibrant, but better than the Tab Prime 6 – Vodafone's attempt at a similar device. The 8-megapixel camera is weak, giving dingy, purplish pictures.

Android 5.1 (Lollipop) runs smoothly on the Harrier Tab, although it's not quite as powerful as the Nexus 9 or even the Tesco Hudl 2, which costs half as much. Complicated websites can make it judder, but basic games run well. Only about 10GB of the built-in 16GB of storage is



available for your own stuff, but there's a **microSD card** slot so you can add more quite cheaply. The battery lasted a reasonable 10 hours of video-watching.

If you only need Wi-Fi, Google's bigger Nexus 9 is a better tablet for about the same price. You could also get the slightly smaller Asus MeMO Pad 7 for at least £50 less, or the much more advanced Samsung Galaxy Tab S 8.4 for £50 more. But if mobile data appeals, and especially if you need a high data contract, the Harrier Tab is a decent buy.

VERDICT: Not the best-value tablet around overall, but a good deal if you need mobile data



ALTERNATIVE: Google Nexus 9 **£210** This slightly larger, older tablet's reduced price makes its Wi-Fi-only version a better buy if you don't really need the 3G/4G option



SPECIFICATIONS

1.5GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 615 eight-core processor • 16GB flash storage • 8in 1920x1080-pixel touchscreen • 8-megapixel rear camera • 2-megapixel webcam • MicroSD card slot • 802.11n Wi-Fi • 3G/4G • Android 5.1 (Lollipop) • 213x124x8.5mm (HxWxD) • 338g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/17778

The best... Mechanical keyboards

Cherry MX Board 6.0

£150 from www.snipca.com/17790

This is Cherry's new flagship keyboard, with adjustable red backlighting and blue highlights for keys like Caps Lock and Windows. It's solidly made, and great for typing, with a big rubber wrist rest that attaches magnetically at the front. But for many users, the advanced technology might be overkill.



Matias Quiet Pro for Mac

£119 from www.snipca.com/17795

This model is available in a 'Tactile' version (with a lovely clicky feel that's very loud) or in this 'Quiet' version. Three extra **USB 2.0** ports are built in, and the USB cable that connects to your Mac is detachable for longer life. However, the two-tone styling looks a bit ugly next to a Mac.



Filco Ninja Majestouch-2

£120 from www.snipca.com/17792

This sturdy keyboard in black plastic can be ordered with red switches, like the MX Board 6.0 (above), which press evenly with no click; blue (which have an audible click and tactile bump), brown (tactile but with no click), or black (like red but heavier). Aimed at touch-typists, the key labels are on the front face, where they are less distracting.



Filco Majestouch MINILA Air

£120 from www.snipca.com/17796

This Bluetooth model is available with a choice of Cherry's MX switch types. An adapted layout makes it very compact and portable, but it might throw off your touch-typing at first. One alternative is Matias' Bluetooth Folding UK Keyboard for iPad, iPhone and Mac (£24 from www.snipca.com/17797).



Reviews

PHONE | £188 from Amazon www.snipca.com/17799

Alcatel Onetouch Idol 3 (5.5in)

A big phone from a smaller name

Alcatel is a French telecoms company that's been making budget phones since the days when we wondered why people wanted fancy features like a camera. In the smartphone era, it's still a top-10 brand, and this latest Android model is more distinctive and luxurious than we had any right to expect.

With stereo speakers at top and bottom – or left and right when you're watching in landscape – the Idol 3 has a symmetrical design, and can be used any way up. Shiny metal trim contrasts nicely with the brushed plastic sides and back, which only come in dark grey.

SPECIFICATIONS

5.5in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 13-megapixel rear camera • 8-megapixel front camera • 16GB flash storage • MicroSD card slot • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 3G/4G • 153x75x7.4mm (HxWxD) • 141g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/17801

In our tests, the 13-megapixel camera worked fine for both photos and video, although others phones beat it in low-lit conditions. For a webcam, the 8-megapixel camera on the front is unusually clear. The screen goes very bright, and looks sharp with good contrast and decent colour accuracy. The battery will easily get through a full day, although it takes two-and-a-half hours to charge up again.

Performance is a little off the pace by current standards, reasonably smooth but behind budget rivals such as the revamped Motorola Moto G. The Idol 3 isn't up to the most demanding 3D games, and more significantly we experienced some stutters in general use. Even web browsing made the phone very warm.

Given that an Android phone will only get slower over time, we can't give the

Idol 3 full marks, but it's a good phone for the money. There's also a smaller 4.7in version, which you can get for as little as £150 (www.snipca.com/17800).



VERDICT: A stylish phone with good cameras, a sharp screen and excellent battery life



ALTERNATIVE: Sony Xperia M4 Aqua £210 Unlike the Idol 3 this is waterproof, but it's slightly pricier, with half the built-in storage



PHONE | €299 (£218) from Meizu www.snipca.com/17798

Meizu MX4 Ubuntu Edition

A different kind of smartphone – but not in a good way

If you want a smartphone, you have only a few **proprietary** operating systems to pick from – Apple's iOS, Google's Android, BlackBerry or Microsoft's Windows Phone (soon to be Windows 10 Mobile). Here's an alternative: Ubuntu Phone, based on the **open-source** Linux.

The first Ubuntu mobile, the BQ Aquaris, was poor. This second one is based on Meizu's MX4, previously an Android phone. It's a good-looking phone with a large, sharp screen, slightly broader than Full HD, and a decent 20.7-megapixel camera.

But even basic features are few and far between. While phone calls and texting

are built in, email needs a third-party app. And Ubuntu's app store just can't compete with Apple or Google. Facebook and Twitter are supported, but WhatsApp only has an unofficial app, which is fiddly to install. You can get Cut the Rope, but not Candy Crush.

Besides apps, Ubuntu Phone has 'scopes', which are screens that show information from a particular source – BBC News, for example – or of related types. Their neat simplicity will encourage more services to support them, but doesn't make up for failings like the dismal Here Maps app. There's no equivalent of Apple's iTunes Store or Google Play, and we found transferring our own music or video files tricky from a PC and impossible from a Mac.

Despite powerful hardware, the software doesn't run smoothly. The battery can last more than a day in light



use but less than half a day playing video or games, and the phone gets really hot. We wouldn't buy it. Nor should you.

VERDICT: This Ubuntu Phone has some promising ideas, but it's not a good choice yet



ALTERNATIVE: BQ Aquaris E4.5 Ubuntu Edition £121 This remains the only other Ubuntu phone, and although cheaper it's even harder to recommend



SPECIFICATIONS

5.36in 1920x1152-pixel screen • 20.7-megapixel rear camera • 2-megapixel front camera • 16GB flash storage • MicroSD card slot • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 3G/4G • 144x75x8.9mm (HxWxD) • 147g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/17798



DS115j AND DS215j

THE PERFECT DATA STORAGE SOLUTION FOR YOUR HOME

Run your own personal cloud from the comfort and security of your home



POWER-SAVING AND RELIABLE

DS215j features a dual-core CPU, supports up to 12TB of data and consumes less than 14w when active while the DS115j offers a stable storage environment for users with no need for raid, consuming less than 11w when active.

ACCESS ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Synology NAS' and the intuitive DiskStation Manager (DSM) software allow users to sync and share files among multiple devices, including Windows PC, Mac, Linux, iOS, Android and Windows Phone.

MULTIMEDIA CENTRE

Audio Station, Photo Station, Video Station and Media Server transform your Synology NAS into a centralised multimedia hub.

Where to Buy

amazon.co.uk

The electronics specialist
maplin

Synology apps available on

iOS



Synology's Media
Accolades



Reviews

PRINTER | £169 from Ballicom www.snipca.com/17783

Ricoh SP 3600 DN

A fast mono laser that's cheap to run

There are some very cheap black-and-white laser printers around, and if you just need to print a few pages of crisp black text, they're a good option. Try using one for anything more demanding, though, such as printing a few hundred copies of a newsletter, and their limitations in terms of speed, reliability, and running costs will become all too evident.

“It works hard, produces razor-sharp text and prints multiple sheets quickly”

While it's still quite affordable, this compact model from Ricoh is actually a proper office machine. You don't get conveniences like Wi-Fi, but with a **duty cycle** of 50,000 pages a month and a quoted speed of 30 pages per minute, it's ready for hard work. It prints both sides of the paper (duplex), and its LED engine,

SPECIFICATIONS

1200dpi maximum print resolution • Duplex • USB 2.0 • Ethernet • 268x370x392mm (HxWxD) • 14.5kg • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/17784

a variation on laser technology, produces 1200 dots per inch (dpi) for sharper text than the 600dpi of budget lasers.

A 1,500-page toner cartridge is supplied, which you can replace with 3,000 or 6,000-page units. Taking into account the replacement drum that you'll need every 20,000 pages, the cost per page works out at just 1.2p when you buy the larger cartridges.

We found text output was excellent – deep black and razor sharp, with no jagged edges. Graphics and photos looked better than we'd expect from a mono laser, despite a bit of banding and over-dark shading. As befits a workhorse model, the feed mechanism – 250-sheet paper tray and 100-sheet bypass tray that lets you load two kinds of paper at the same time – feels robust, unlike the flimsy arrangements found in cheaper printers. The 125-sheet output tray has a solid stop to prevent sheets falling off. Our only complaint was that when we used the secondary feed to print envelopes, they got creased.

The only catch with a heavy-duty printer is that it's optimised for long

runs, so printing one page takes slightly longer than with some models, at 20-25 seconds. But 100 pages were churned out in just over four minutes.

VERDICT: If you need professional quality and more than just occasional printing, this is a solid choice

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung ProXpress M3320ND £94 This printer has similar specifications but it lacks the secondary tray and, at 2.2p per page, is pricier to run



WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best portable printer?

Q Is there such a thing as a portable printer? Something small you could take with you to make the occasional print from a laptop or iPad. I know there are 'pocket printers', but these are aimed more at high-quality photos.

Eric Bell

A Portable document printers aren't cheap. Canon's Pixma iP110 (£205 from www.snipca.com/17788, pictured) is probably the

closest to what you want: it prints in full colour and is compact, weighing 2.2kg. There's also a pricier version with a rechargeable battery (£234 from www.snipca.com/17789). HP's Officejet 100 (£150 from www.snipca.com/17785) includes a battery at a lower price, but is bulkier and doesn't work with iPads.

Black-and-white portable printers tend to be very expensive. Brother makes the most compact **thermal printers**, but they start at £400 (www.snipca.com/17787).

Pocket photo printers cost £75-125, but

their special paper cartridges are expensive and, as you say, only really suited to photos. Canon's Selphy CP910 (£79 from www.snipca.com/17786) uses ordinary paper and supports both PCs and tablets (though users report that it won't work wirelessly with Windows 8 or higher), but it's still limited to postcard size and only runs from the mains.



Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk



VIDEO CAMERA | £799 from Jessops www.snipca.com/17812

Panasonic HC-WX970

A 4K video camera from the future

You could be forgiven for thinking 4K was just the latest way to sell us all an expensive new telly. Do we really need four times as many pixels as HD? In short, no. But when you watch old pre-HD recordings, be honest: they do look a bit fuzzy now. The more detail you can capture, the more future-proof your home videos will be.

And 4K has a new benefit: the resolution is so high (eight megapixels to be precise) that a single frame is as sharp as a high-quality photo. 4K camcorders like the WX970 help you take advantage of that. You are paying extra for 4K, but you're getting it in a compact unit with lots of features that make it easy to use. Even professional film-makers will envy its light weight and built-in stabilisation, which lets you point it anywhere and get a steady shot.

“It lets you create home movies that will look sharp and fresh long into the future”

The 20x optical zoom means you can get much closer and retain the same image quality. The Leica lens has a fast f/1.8 aperture (falling to f/3.6 as you zoom in), which in plain English means it gathers lots of light. Combined with useful manual options, the lens gives you real control over depth of field, if you want to get arty. If you just want to point and shoot, the WX970 does that too.

At any time, you can hit the separate camera button to take a still shot.



That gives you two ways to preserve your memories, but the WX970 doesn't stop there. On the edge of the flip-out LCD screen is a miniature camera. You can adjust this to point at yourself or something else, and record it at the same time. The second image appears in the corner of your frame. It feels rather odd, but we do like the idea of getting two viewpoints simultaneously.

Consumer cameras don't cope well with very bright and very dark areas in the same scene. They deal with this by over-exposing, meaning the lightest areas get 'blown out'. That's why the sky in home videos is often white. The WX970's HDR option brings some detail back to highlights and shadows, without making things look artificial. It does this by reducing the resolution from 4K to Full HD. The same trick is used to get 4x slow-motion recording (120 frames per second), or 8x with some digital enhancement.

There's no viewfinder, but the LCD is reasonably clear. You can also control the camera over Wi-Fi using a mobile app; there's a delay between what you see and what's recording, but it's a useful option.

Moving to 4K at this early stage in the life of the technology does bring some problems. You can play back 4K recordings straight from the camera's microHDMI port to an HDTV or monitor, even if it doesn't support 4K. But just one hour of video will fill a 32GB SD card. For long-term storage,

consider buying a 4TB external hard drive for about £100 – that's 124 hours. Editing is another area of concern. Some consumer software doesn't handle 4K yet, and even if it can, your PC may struggle. So you might first have to make a copy of your footage at reduced resolution. Alternatively, you can opt to record in Full HD (1080p) to produce much smaller files.

Although the video modes offered by cameras with interchangeable lens offer more creative potential, you can't beat a camcorder for simple, flexible shooting. The WX970 will last you a good while, and let you create home movies that will look sharp and feel fresh long into the future. It's overpriced, however, compared with the VX870, which lacks the secondary camera but deserves serious consideration.

SPECIFICATIONS

4K video • 20x zoom (31–626mm) • 3in screen • Photo function • Secondary camera • SDXC card slot • 73x65x139mm (HxWxD) • 360g • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/17809

VERDICT: Excellent picture quality and comprehensive features make this a future-proof, albeit pricey, camera

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Panasonic HC-VX870
£615 This has very similar features except for the secondary camera, so it's probably a better buy for most users



E-READER | £120 from Argos www.snipca.com/17776

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite (2015)

New version of the affordable e-reader

When we reviewed the Kobo Glo HD (see our review, Issue 452), we said Amazon had better watch out, because this ebook reader had a sharper screen than its similarly priced Kindle Paperwhite. As it turns out, Amazon already had an answer up its sleeve: a new version of the Paperwhite, upgraded from 212 to 300 pixels per inch (ppi).

This seems like a good time to clear up a misconception. People seem to think 300ppi is 'like a real book'. It's true that we talk about 300ppi in the publishing industry, but it's for pictures, not text. Printing plates are made at 2400dpi (dots per inch), but when we print photos, most of that resolution is used for shading. On solid black text, we get to use the full 2400dpi.

A 300ppi screen doesn't sound so great now, does it? The digital display has an extra trick, though: it can make each dot a shade of grey. That enables anti-aliasing, which smooths out the edges of characters to make them more distinct. It helps – but it's still not as sharp as using 64 times more dots. And there's room for Amazon to give us even sharper screens: Samsung's Galaxy S6 phone has 571 ppi.

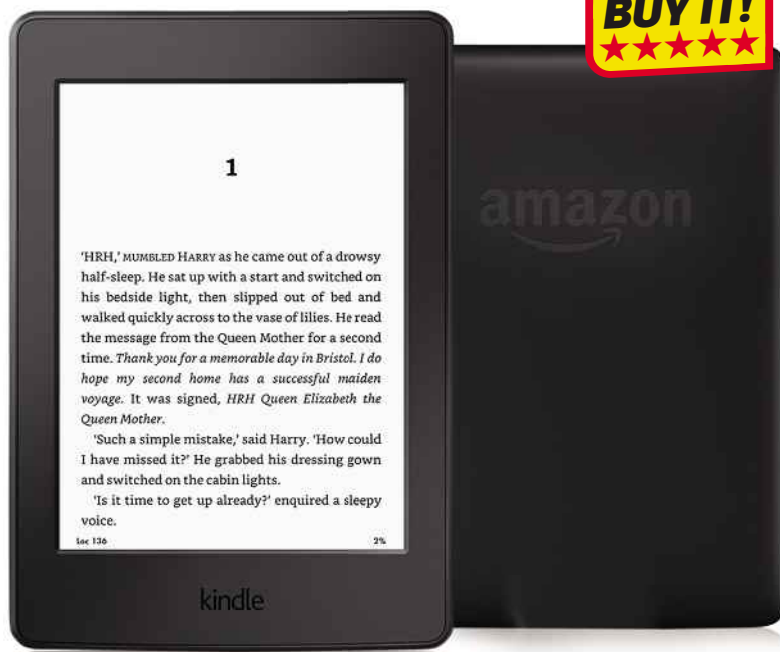
“A great e-reader with sharp text, a backlight and long battery life”

For now, though, we have to admit the Paperwhite (2015) does look very sharp. It seems identical to the more expensive Kindle Voyage, so the Glo HD has some serious competition now. Contrast could be better, but turning on the backlight (technically more like a sidelight) helps, and also means you can read in the dark. The Glo has a similar feature, hence the name. Both work very evenly.

What the Paperwhite, like the Glo HD,

SPECIFICATIONS

6in E Ink touchscreen • 2GB memory • 802.11n Wi-Fi • 3G (optional) • Reads AZW and AZW3, MOBI, PRC formats • 169x117x9.1mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/17769



still lacks compared with the Kindle Voyage is an ambient light sensor to adjust the brightness. Instead, you have to fiddle with it yourself to keep it readable. The light uses more power, but that's not a huge concern when battery life is quoted at six weeks, based on 30-minutes-per-day average use. Even if you're a more avid reader than that, it won't run out before you finish your book.

The quality of the display also depends on the built-in software. Kindles have never been particularly good at typesetting: the way they space words to 'justify' each line is clumsy, and their choice of fonts and styles isn't great. Amazon is working on it, and a brand new text 'engine' is on the way, which will be available to install on the Paperwhite in the near future. You do get a new font, called Bookerly (see our Workshop on page 42), designed specially for e-reading. We like it, but we think more work is needed.

The final difference between the Paperwhite and the Glo HD is that the latter has a shiny screen, while the Paperwhite has a matt finish that feels a bit like paper. This is a matter of personal preference: try both devices in a shop if you can. In both cases, you'll be touching

the screen a lot, because that's the only way to turn pages – there are no buttons.

In other respects the new Paperwhite feels similar to the old one, just more rubbery and fingerprint-resistant. It's a significant improvement, and as good as the Voyage unless you want page-turn buttons and automatic light adjustment. At £120, or £10 less for the 'With Special Offers' option that shows adverts on your lock screen, it's good value. But the Glo HD is smaller and lighter, with the same screen size, and has twice as much storage. The real choice is whether you want to use Amazon's Kindle Store or independent ebookshops.

VERDICT: It's still not perfect, but at this price the Paperwhite is our new favourite e-reader – just



ALTERNATIVE: Kobo Glo HD £110 This slightly smaller reader is also excellent. While the Paperwhite is linked to Amazon's Kindle Store, the Glo uses generic EPUB and EPUB3 books from other sellers



D-Link PowerLine AV2 1000HD Gigabit Starter Kit

A faster way to network through your mains circuit

Both thick-walled old houses and modern insulated homes can stifle wireless networks, so most of us will find far-flung corners of our home where the signal is weak. Powerline network kits are the easiest solution. They come as a pair of three-pin power plugs. You put one in a mains socket beside your router, and the other in your Wi-Fi blackspot. They then use the 240-volt electrical ring main in your house to pass data. Any computer connected to the remote plug will receive a signal as if it were directly connected to your router.



“It’s easy to set up and doesn’t consume much power, but a pass-through power socket would be nice”

It’s easy to set up and doesn’t consume much power (3.7 watts or less, in this instance) and is a breeze to set up. And because the signal can’t pass beyond your fuse box, privacy is guaranteed. Having said that, there have been a few stories flying around about people discovering their unorthodox wiring prevented them from accessing their own broadband, while their neighbours had no trouble. Blame cowboy electricians for that, not the technology.

How fast it works depends partly on your circuitry, but the kits come in varying speeds, and this is one of the fastest, even if the claimed 1Gbps is purely theoretical. We downloaded a one-hour TV programme from BBC iPlayer in just under a minute and a half, which was a bit slow. However, a 1GB folder of small files took only a few

seconds longer than that, which is on a par with BT Infinity’s superfast broadband. Video also streamed smoothly from one device to another as we watched it.

It’s annoying that there’s no pass-through power socket, so when you plug the unit into the mains you lose a power point. That’s important because for the best performance you shouldn’t use a powerline adapter through an extension lead, so having enough sockets is crucial. It’s not much use if there’s nowhere left to plug in your PC alongside the adapter.

The AV2 1000HD is very reasonably priced, but also pretty basic. There’s just a single Ethernet port on each plug; to connect multiple computers you’d need to add an Ethernet switch (about £20 for gigabit speed). If you need to connect mobile devices via Wi-Fi, consider Devolo’s dLAN range instead (see our review, Issue 450).

VERDICT: If you don’t need Wi-Fi access, this is an easy way to set up a fast extension to your network

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Netgear PLP1200 £80

Rated slightly faster, this is a similar kit; the higher price gets you pass-through power sockets



SPECIFICATIONS

Theoretical maximum speed of 1000Mbps • Gigabit Ethernet ports • Encrypted • 88x62x30mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/17840

COMING SOON

AUTUMN 2015

The mobile version of Microsoft’s Windows 10 wasn’t ready for launch when the Desktop operating system arrived in July. Its arrival should bring with it new handsets, and existing Lumia 535, 640 and 930 users will be able to upgrade.



AUTUMN 2015

Acer is releasing a range of ‘Cloudbooks’ running Windows 10. These light, cheap laptops are designed mostly to be used for web browsing, rivaling Google’s Chromebooks.



AUTUMN 2015

Google’s next-generation Nexus smartphones are expected in late September, made by Huawei and LG. Details are still emerging, but we know they’ll feature the new Android 6.0 operating system ‘Marshmallow’, as well as the USB Type-C connector, which plugs in both ways round.



2016

Nokia’s N1 tablet is already out, but only in China so far. Similar in size to an iPad mini, the N1 runs a custom version of Android. With good performance and battery life, it comes with 32GB of storage for about £200 – but when is it coming to the UK, Nokia?



NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
30 Sept



Toshiba Canvio Connect II
A hard drive worth getting excited about

HP Envy x360
HP’s redesigned convertible laptop



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Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus X555LA-XX290H
£300 from www.snipca.com/16158
Tested: Issue 446



Asus has made all the right choices with this budget Windows 8.1 laptop. Its comfortable keyboard, fast performance, respectably lengthy battery life and bright screen are all the more impressive given its low price.

ALTERNATIVE **Asus Chromebook C200**
A cheap Chrome OS ultra-portable laptop with a bright screen, lengthy battery life and a great keyboard. £214 from www.snipca.com/17296

DESKTOP PC

PC Specialist Trion 960
£650 from www.snipca.com/17254
Tested: Issue 454

You could spend less on a usable PC, but this solid tower system has great all-round performance, including decent Nvidia GTX 960 graphics card. A 120GB SSD and 1TB hard drive offers speed and space, but Wi-Fi costs £15 extra.



ALTERNATIVE: Palicomp Intel i5 Elite
For £50 less, this is a similar PC in many respects, but compromises on graphics with the cheaper GTX 750 card. £600 from www.snipca.com/17297

TABLET

Apple iPad Mini 2
£239 from www.snipca.com/14467
Tested: Issue 416



Apple's mini tablet from 2013 is now available at an even lower price. The only thing it lacks compared with the Mini 3 is a fingerprint sensor and the option of lots of built-in storage. Otherwise, it's an absolute bargain.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPad Air 2 A
thin and lightweight 10in tablet with a fingerprint reader, an excellent screen and peerless selection of apps. £399 from www.snipca.com/16717

PHONE

Samsung Galaxy A3
£190 from www.snipca.com/17193
Tested: Issue 454



Similar in size to an iPhone 6, this Android phone doesn't have a high-res screen or high-end performance for advanced games and creative apps, but it lasts over 14 hours on a charge, has a great camera and is reasonably priced.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony Xperia Z1 Compact
We recommended this back in Issue 419 and it's still a great phone. £240 from www.snipca.com/17905

DIGITAL CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6
£284 from www.snipca.com/17548
Tested: Issue 405



This compact, interchangeable-lens camera is small and reasonably priced, yet it has well-designed controls, a wide range of available lenses and shoots excellent quality photos. The GF6 really is unbeatable value.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony A5000 A rival CSC with better low-light performance, although its controls and range of available lenses aren't quite as good. £240 from www.snipca.com/15854

E-READER

NEW ENTRY

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite
£120 from www.snipca.com/17776
Tested: Issue 458



With a new high-resolution screen, the affordable Kindle lacks only automatic brightness adjustment and page-turn buttons (you have to swipe the screen). It's great value as long as you're happy to buy your books from Amazon.

ALTERNATIVE: Kobo Glo HD As good as the Paperwhite but with more storage, and slightly more compact, this is the independent e-reader to pick. £110 from www.snipca.com/17889

HOMEPLUGS

D-Link PowerLine AV2 1000HD Gigabit Starter Kit
£47 from www.snipca.com/17836
Tested: Issue 444



These fast adaptors connect one Ethernet-ready computer or device to your router via the mains wiring, without cables or Wi-Fi. Check you have a power socket free – multi-adaptors aren't recommended.

ALTERNATIVE: Devolo dLAN 1200+ Wifi ac Starter Kit If you need to connect Wi-Fi devices where Wi-Fi won't reach, get this instead. £158 from www.snipca.com/17890

SMART TV

Samsung UE40H5500
£328 from www.snipca.com/17715
Tested: Issue 446



A 40in smart TV with great picture quality and apps for all the terrestrial TV catch-up services. It has plenty of extras too, such as recording to USB storage, playing media files stored on a NAS or USB stick and plenty of HDMI ports.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony KDL-42W705B
Excellent image quality, stylish looks and a 42in screen. £420 from www.snipca.com/17550

WEB DESIGN

PRICE
DROP

Xara Web Designer Premium 11
£60 from www.snipca.com/16955
Tested: Issue 453



This visual web-design program makes creating sites more like laying out a document than writing HTML code, and sites can be 'responsive', meaning they look right on both big and small screens without extra work. A basic version is also available for half the price.

ALTERNATIVE: Serif WebPlus X8
Comes with lots of templates, but creates separate desktop and mobile versions instead of responsive sites, and can be slow to use. £90 from www.snipca.com/14964

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

NEW
ENTRY

Canon Pixma MG6650
£79 from www.snipca.com/17334
Tested: Issue 455



It may look like something that James Bond would have to defuse, but this low-cost, all-in-one printer is an excellent choice. Running costs are reasonable too.

ALTERNATIVE: Canon Pixma MX495
It's slow, and black ink is pricey, but this cheaper MFP has a paper feeder and fax too. £48 from www.snipca.com/17174

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Crucial BX100 1TB
£259 from www.snipca.com/16017
Tested: Issue 445



A blindingly fast, high-capacity SSD at a lower price than ever before. If you've been put off buying a SSD because of the cost, then now is finally the time to take the plunge.

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung 850 Pro 256GB An even faster SSD, but it is much more expensive per gigabyte. £110 from www.snipca.com/16498

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD
£144 from www.snipca.com/11646
Tested: Issue 420



A home-security camera that's well priced and easy to set up. Plus, it has great picture quality, useful apps and there's no need to subscribe to any extra services. It's a worthy successor to the original HomeMonitor, our previous favourite security camera.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link Wireless N Day & Night Camera A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £88 from www.snipca.com/15275

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2016

£19.99 from www.snipca.com/17874

Tested: Issue 437



Kaspersky Internet Security 2016 has won our past six antivirus tests. Compatible with Windows 10, the 2016 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-device licence, or buy a three-device licence for just £39.99 at www.snipca.com/17903.

ALTERNATIVE: Avast Free Antivirus

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but sometimes blocked legitimate software. Free from www.snipca.com/16493

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6

£104 from www.snipca.com/16952

Tested: Issue 453



Adobe's Photoshop is ideal for image manipulation, but Lightroom is the better choice for managing and tweaking photos. The first choice of professionals, it's easy for anyone to use, combining technical and artistic adjustments with rating, keywording and archiving.

ALTERNATIVE: Adobe CC Photography Plan

Rather than buying Lightroom, you can subscribe for a reasonable £8.57 a month (paid annually) to use Lightroom and Photoshop www.snipca.com/17270

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 2 Netgear D6400 VDSL/ADSL modem router

Netgear's new D6400 VDSL/ADSL modem router delivers incredibly fast, reliable Wi-Fi in your home, with speeds of up to 1.6Gbps. Capable of supporting up to 10 devices, it's perfect for smooth HD video streaming and delay-free multiplayer online gaming. You can easily control and manage the router via your phone or tablet using Netgear's Genie app. To enter, email your address to acomp@computeractive.co.uk by midnight 29 September.



The Netgear D6400 VDSL/ADSL modem router is available to buy now priced £149.99 from Amazon (www.snipca.com/17743). For more info visit www.netgear.co.uk and follow Netgear on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NetgearUK

PC MONITOR

Dell UltraSharp U2412M

£195 from www.snipca.com/15271

Tested: Issue 378



An exquisite monitor with superb image quality, an adjustable stand, a high resolution and even a built-in USB hub. It costs a little more than other monitors, but it's money well spent. It's easily the best value monitor we've seen and is the one by which all others are judged.

ALTERNATIVE: AOC i2360PHU A good quality budget 23in monitor that's easily adjustable and has a built-in USB 2.0 hub too. £134 from www.snipca.com/16706

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£95 from www.snipca.com/15855

Tested: Issue 427



An incredibly fast 802.11ac router that's also one of the cheapest we've seen. It's superb and it's the router to buy if you're ready to make the jump to 802.11ac.

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £170 from www.snipca.com/14950

NAS

Synology DiskStation DS215j

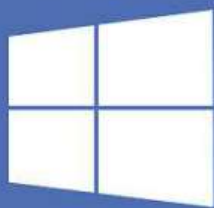
£134 from www.snipca.com/16187

Tested: Issue 449



This two-drive NAS enclosure has it all – fast performance, easy configuration and plenty of extra features. Its only flaw is that installation is a little fiddly – but if you want quality network storage, then this is the obvious choice.

ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j A four-drive NAS that's generally fast, easy to set up and use. £243 from www.snipca.com/16707



Windows 10

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8GB 2133MHz DDR4 Memory
1000GB Seagate SSHD Hybrid Drive
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Microsoft Windows 10 Home

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FUSION CENTURION

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Intel® Core™ i5-6600K Skylake Processor
Akasa Nero 3 CPU Cooler
Asus Z170-K Motherboard
Nvidia GeForce GTX 750 1GB
8GB 2133MHz DDR4 Memory
128GB Samsung M.2 PCIe SSD
1000GB Hard Disk Drive
Aerocool 600W Power Supply
Onboard High Definition Audio
Microsoft Windows 10 Home

From **£649** inc VAT



FUSION NEO

Zalman Z11 Neo Case
Intel® Core™ i5-6600K Skylake Processor
Corsair H55 Liquid Cooler
Asus Z170-K Motherboard
Nvidia GeForce GTX 960 2GB
16GB 2133MHz DDR4 Memory
128GB Samsung M.2 PCIe SSD
1000GB Seagate SSHD Hybrid Drive
Aerocool 600W Power Supply
Onboard High Definition Audio
Microsoft Windows 10 Home

From **£999** inc VAT



FUSION CORE

Thermaltake Core V51 Case
Intel® Core™ i5-6600K Skylake Processor
Corsair H55 Liquid Cooler
Asus Z170 PRO GAMER Motherboard
Nvidia GeForce GTX 970 4GB
16GB 2133MHz DDR4 Memory
256GB Samsung M.2 PCIe SSD
2000GB SSHD Hybrid Drive
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** Chillblast won more awards in the leading IT press publications PC Pro, PC Advisor and Computer Shopper combined than any other retailer 2010-2013

*** World's fastest PC as tested by PC Pro Magazine <http://www.pcpro.co.uk/reviews/desktops/371152/chillblast-fusion-photo-oc-iv>
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I would recommend this product to anyone who enjoys this magazine as much as I do

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Sproggit ★★★★★

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David ★★★★★

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Nephron8 ★★★★★

Easy to use, does what it says on the tin!

Allan Feeney ★★★★★



PLUS

Our 2013 Back Issue CD has also sold out, but we've ordered more. Keep checking at www.snipca.com/16010



Workshops & Tips

PULL OUT
& KEEP
Issue 458

14 pages of easy-to-follow workshops and expert tips

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38 Find out if your ISP is overcharging you

40 Add virtual Desktops to Windows 7 and 8
42 Use superb new Kindle tools

PLUS

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44 Phone & Tablet Tips
46 Make Windows Better

47 Make Office Better
48 Secret Tips For... Your second monitor

Make Windows 10 safe and private



What you need: Windows 7, 8.1, 10 **Time required:** 45 minutes

On the whole, Windows 10 has received a favourable reception, though many are concerned by questions of privacy and specifically the information Microsoft gathers about you when using its new operating system.

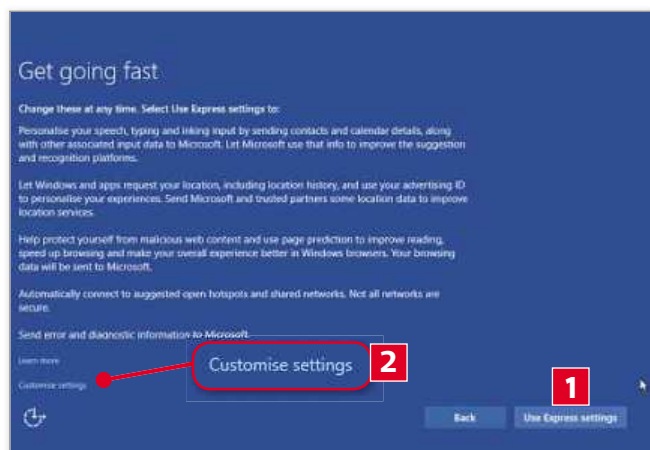
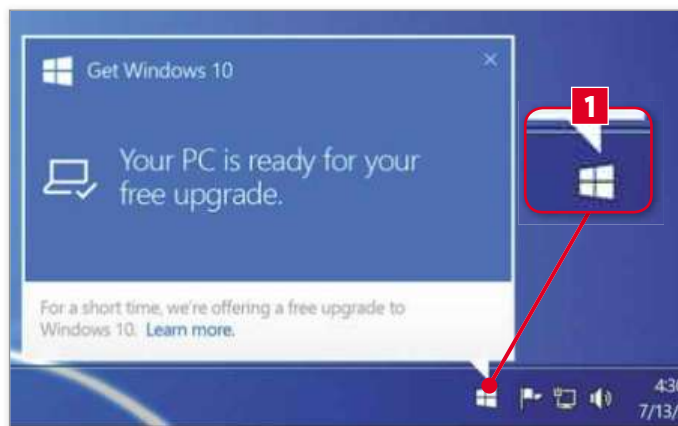
Whether you're already using

Windows 10 or are about to upgrade, this Workshop shows you how to modify your settings to safeguard your privacy, and how to enable safety features that are turned off by default.

Skip to Step 5 if you've already upgraded to Windows 10.

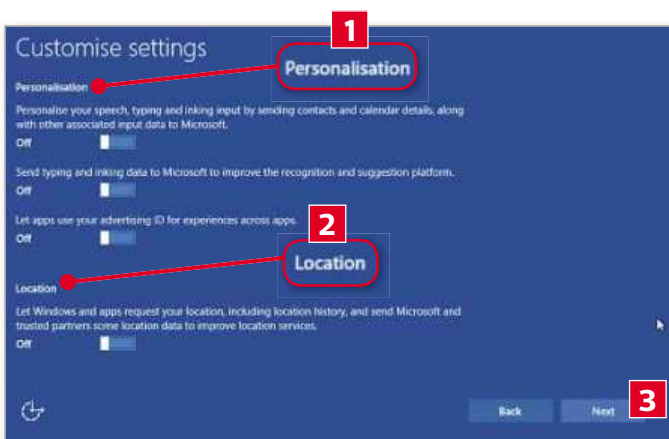


STEP 1 Changing your privacy settings is easier if you haven't already upgraded to Windows 10 because you get the option to disable many privacy settings during setup. If you reserved Windows 10, you should be able to upgrade your PC by clicking the Windows icon **1** in the notification area of your Taskbar. Follow our special Workshop (Issue 456, page 56) on upgrading to Windows 10, until you reach the 'Get going fast' screen (see screenshot in Step 2).



STEP 2 Don't select 'Use Express settings' **1** because it lets Microsoft access your contacts, calendar, typing input, location, browsing data and so on. It does this primarily so Cortana (Microsoft's personal voice assistant) can give you relevant search results more quickly and it also helps Microsoft target you with personalised ads. To tighten up your privacy settings, click 'Customise settings' **2**.

Workshops

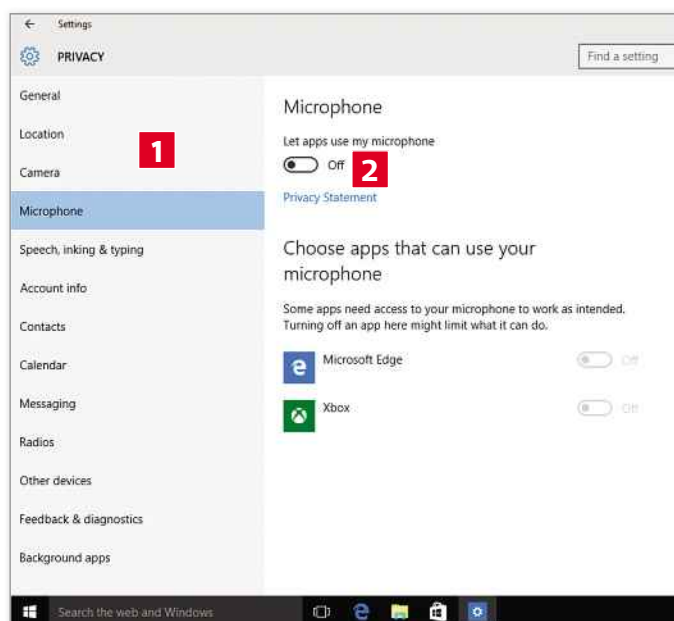


STEP 3 Now click all the sliders in the Personalisation **1** and Location sections **2** to turn them off. This prevents Microsoft from accessing your contact details, recording what you type, targetting you with ads and tracking where you are. Bear in mind, this means Cortana won't be able to personalise suggestions because it can't access your data, but you'll still be able to carry out searches for items on your PC. Click Next **3**.

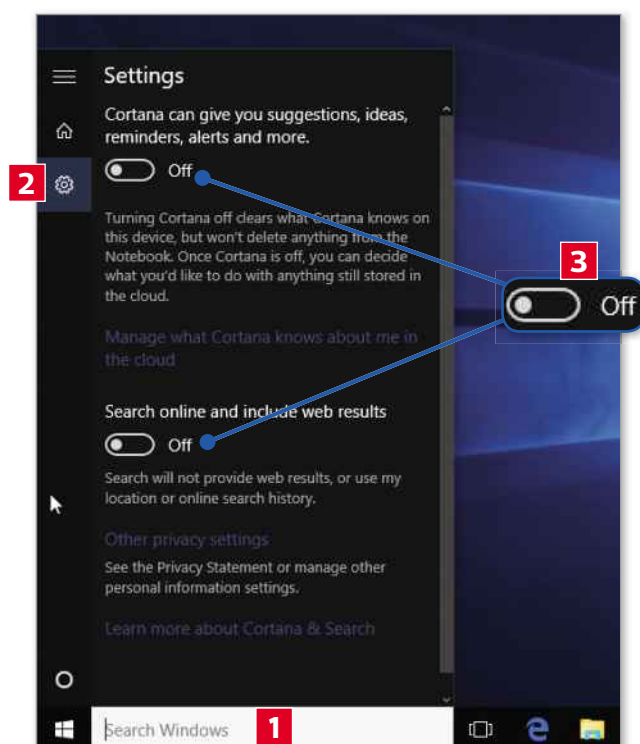
STEP 4 Now turn off the sliders in the 'Browser and protection' section **1** and in 'Connectivity and error reporting' **2**, then click Next **3**. This stops Microsoft recording what you type in its new browser Microsoft Edge. It also makes your Wi-Fi connections more secure by turning off Wi-Fi Sense (see Step 8). When you reach the 'Make it yours' screen, don't log in using your Microsoft account when prompted. Instead, click the 'Skip this step' link at the bottom left. This ensures you log into your PC using a personal username and password (rather than your Microsoft account details).



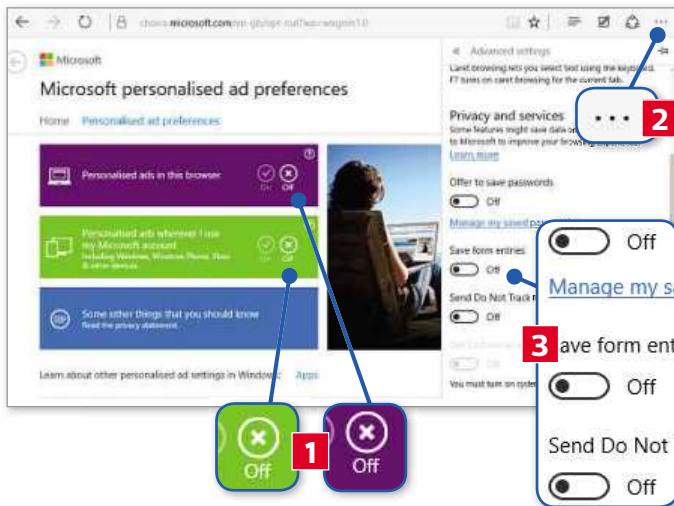
STEP 5 Once you have successfully upgraded, open the Start menu, click Settings at the bottom left, then click Privacy. You'll see a list on the left (including General, Location, Camera and Microphone) **1**. Click each in turn to see which of your PC's features and components Microsoft has access to. Simply turn off the sliders **2** to prevent Microsoft accessing those items (those who carried out Steps 1-4 will notice some of the tweaks have already been made).



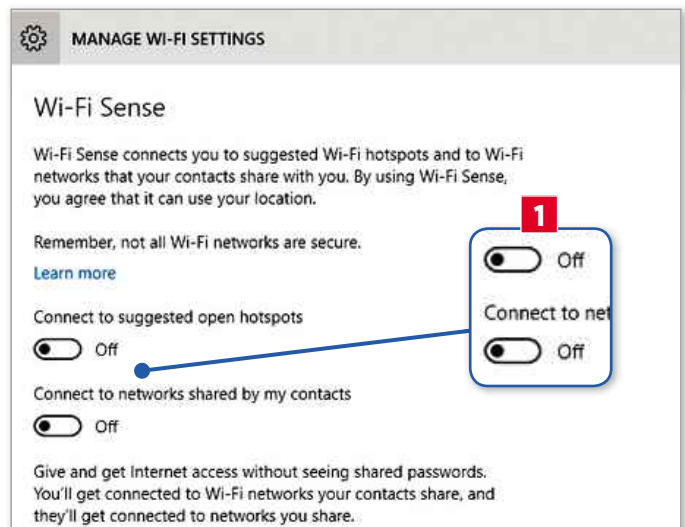
STEP 6 One thing Windows 10 users can do to protect their privacy is turn off Cortana. By default, Cortana can access all your data. It also records whatever you type into the search bar to give you faster search results. To turn Cortana off, click the search bar **1**, then click the settings (cog) icon **2** to bring up Cortana's settings screen. Now turn off both sliders **3**. Bear in mind, this turns off Cortana and search results from the web, but you'll still be able to search for items on your PC.



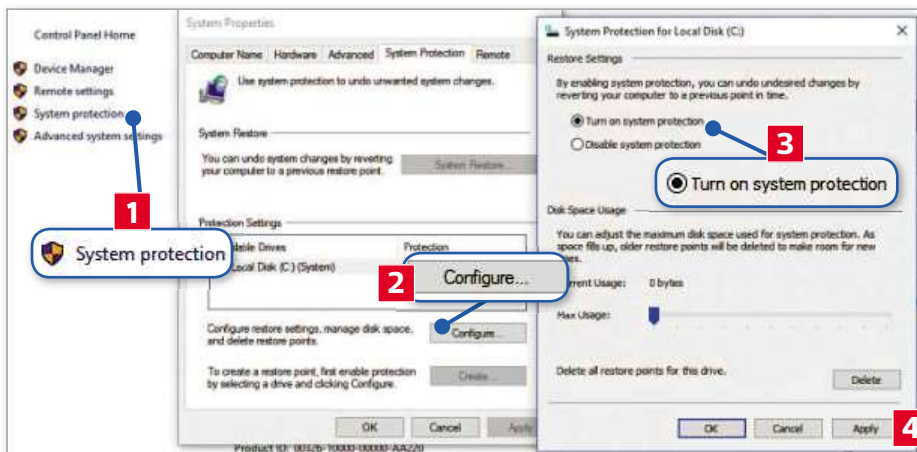
Make Windows 10 safe and private



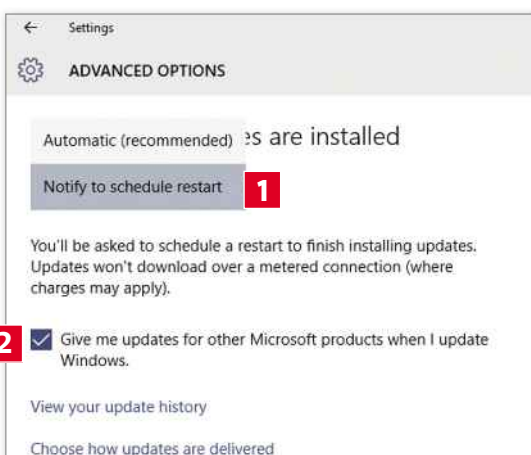
STEP 7 We'll now show you how to make Windows 10's new browser Microsoft Edge more private and safe. Open it, type choice.microsoft.com/en-gb/opt-out in the URL bar and press Enter. Click the Off buttons in the first two sections **1**. This ensures you won't be targeted by personalised ads when browsing in Edge. Now click the three dots at the top **2**, Settings, 'View advanced settings', scroll to the 'Privacy and services' section and untick all its sliders **3** to stop Edge from saving your passwords and any data you enter into online forms.



STEP 8 Windows 10 has a new feature called Wi-Fi Sense, which lets you automatically connect to public Wi-Fi hotspots. It also lets your Outlook contacts, Skype contacts and Facebook friends connect to your Wi-Fi network without you having to give them your password. All your details are encrypted, meaning your friends won't actually see your password. However, if you'd rather turn this off, open the Start menu, click Settings, Network & Internet, Wi-Fi, 'Manage Wi-Fi settings'. Now turn off both the settings **1**.



STEP 9 System Restore lets you roll back your PC to an earlier state to undo any changes you've made since. Unlike in earlier versions, in Windows 10 System Restore is switched off by default, meaning Windows doesn't automatically create **system restore points**. To enable it, open the Start menu, right-click File Explorer at the bottom left and click Properties. Now click 'System protection' **1**, Configure **2**, select 'Turn on system protection' **3**, click Apply **4**, then OK.



STEP 10 Windows 10 automatically downloads system updates in the background, then installs them on your PC (see Question of the Fortnight, page 9). After installing major updates, your PC may restart without your permission. To receive a notification that your PC will restart, open the Start menu, click Settings, Update & Security, then click the 'Advanced options' link. Now click the 'Choose how updates are installed' dropdown menu and select 'Notify to schedule restart' **1**. Tick the box below **2** to ensure that system updates also include updates for Microsoft programs and apps (this will keep your PC safer). ●

Find out if your ISP is overcharging you

What you need: NetWorx; Any version of Windows (XP to 10)

Time required: 30 minutes

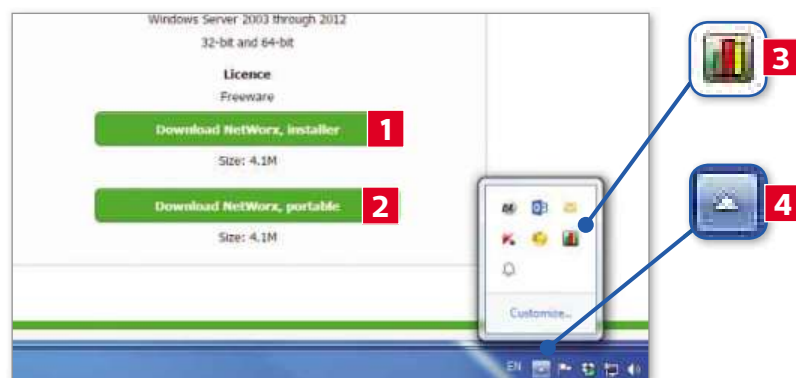
Chances are your ISP promised you mouthwatering broadband speeds when you signed up, but has it lived up to this promise or are you being charged for speeds you're simply not getting? NetWorx is a brilliant free program that can help you determine exactly that.

It logs your internet speeds and

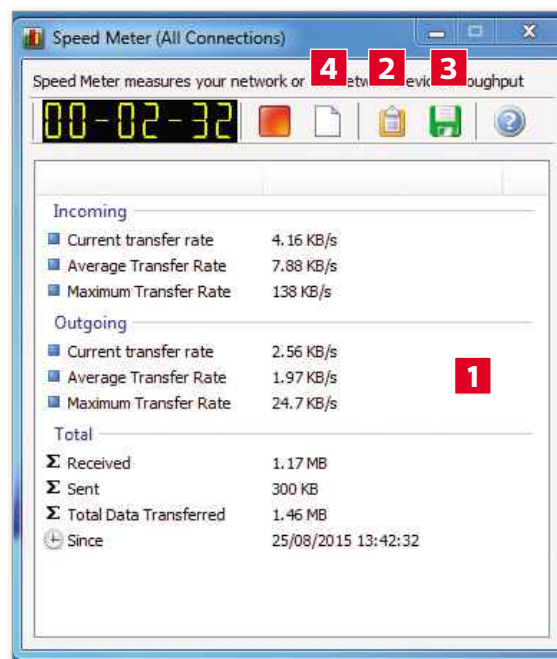
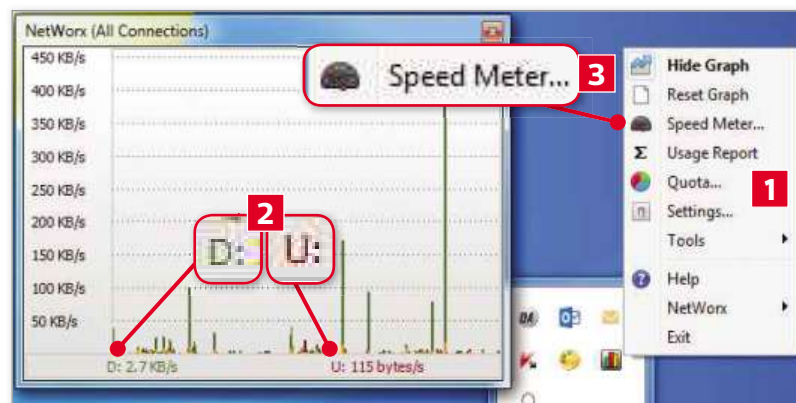
lets you calculate these over a specific time period or as averages over an hour, day, week or month. It can even alert you when your speeds drop below a certain limit. You can then use this data to hold your ISP to account if you feel you're not getting your money's worth.



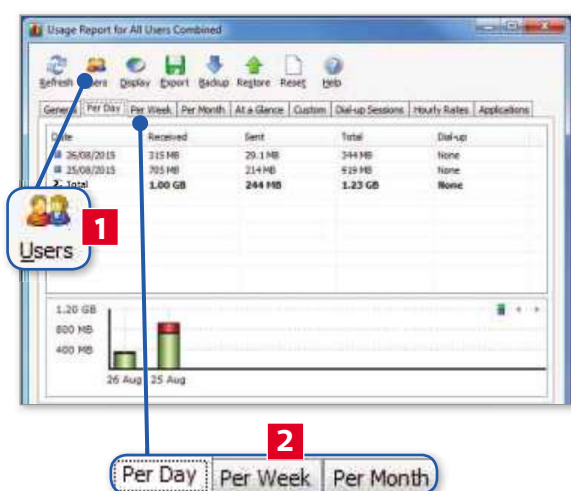
STEP 1 To download the program, go to www.snipca.com/17753, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the 'Download NetWorx, installer' button **1** (or 'Download NetWorx, portable' **2** if you prefer). Click the downloaded setup file and follow the instructions to install and launch it. NetWorx works in the background and you can only access it **3** via the 'Show hidden icons' menu **4** in your Taskbar's notification area.



STEP 2 Click the NetWorx icon to see your current download (DL) and upload (UL) speeds. Right-click the NetWorx icon to see a menu **1** with more detailed info about your network connection. For example, click Show Graph to see a live graph charting your network usage since you installed the program. D and U **2** represent your download and upload speeds respectively. You can calculate your network speeds over a certain time period by clicking Speed Meter **3**.

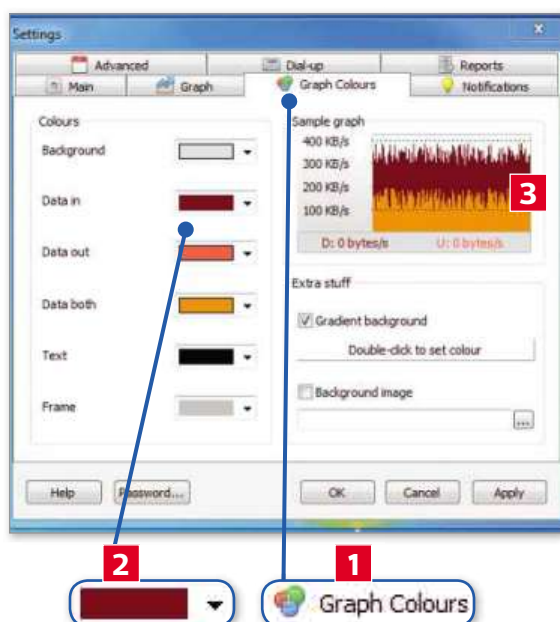
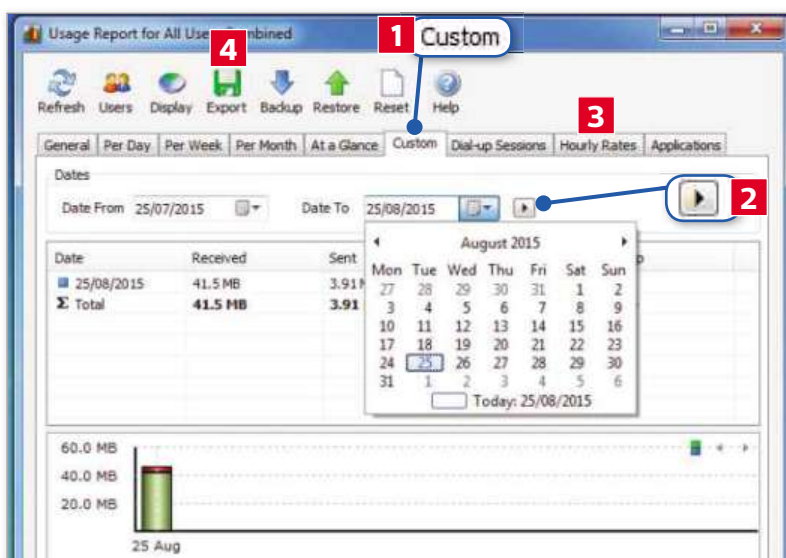


STEP 3 Click the green Play button at the top to start monitoring your speeds **1**. Now minimise this window and use your internet as normal. After a few minutes, open the window again and click the red Stop button. There are two ways to export your speed data. You can click the Clipboard icon **2** to copy the info, then paste it into another program (such as Word or email). Alternatively, export this info as a Notepad file by clicking the Save icon **3**, naming the file, then clicking Save. Click the Reset Counters icon **4** to clear the information.

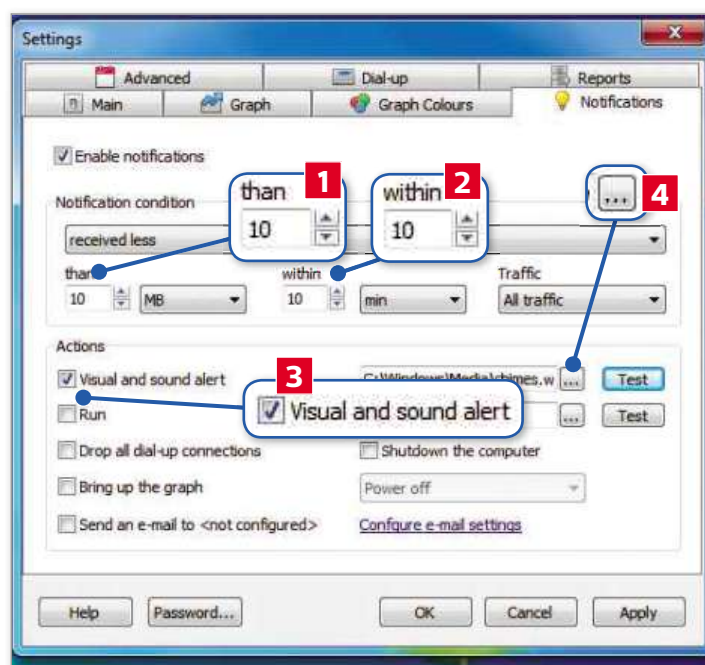


STEP 4 NetWorx also lets you monitor how much data you (or others) are using on your PC because it silently tracks and logs your data usage in handy categories. To find this, right-click the NetWorx icon, then click Usage Report. You'll see a window with a list of buttons and tabs at the top. To monitor the data usage of other PC users, click Users **1**, then switch to that account. You can also monitor usage on a daily, weekly or monthly basis by clicking those tabs **2**.

STEP 5 To monitor usage between specific dates, click the Custom tab **1**. Next, click the Date From and Date To dropdown menus, set your dates using the calendar, then click the arrow icon **2** to see your usage. The Hourly Rates tab **3** breaks down average download and upload rates, as well as total download and upload volumes, into hourly intervals. To export data from any of the selected tabs (as an HTML file), click Export **4**, name the file and save it. Open the file to see the information in your default browser.



STEP 6 Now right-click the NetWorx icon, then click Settings to see a list of useful tabs at the top. For example, click the Graph Colours tab **1** and use the dropdown menus **2** to change the colours of your graph data (see Step 2). Any changes are instantly reflected in the 'Sample graph' **3**. There are several notifications you can set up, but we'll show you how to get an audio alert within 10 minutes of your network speed dropping below 10Mbps (you should find out what speeds your ISP has promised you and set it to that value).



STEP 7 Click the Notifications tab, then tick 'Enable notifications' at the top. Next, click the 'Notification condition' dropdown menu and select 'received less'. Now type 10 in the 'than' field **1** and set the adjacent dropdown menu to MB. Next, type 10 in the 'within' field **2** and set its adjacent dropdown menu to 'min'. Finally, tick 'Visual and sound alert' **3**, click the three dots **4**, navigate to a tone or sound on your PC (go to C Drive/Windows/Media to access a list of your PC's default sounds). Click Test to listen to it. Now, click Apply, then OK. Now whenever your speeds drop below the criteria and within the time limit you set, you'll hear this sound. ●

Get virtual desktops in Windows 7 and 8

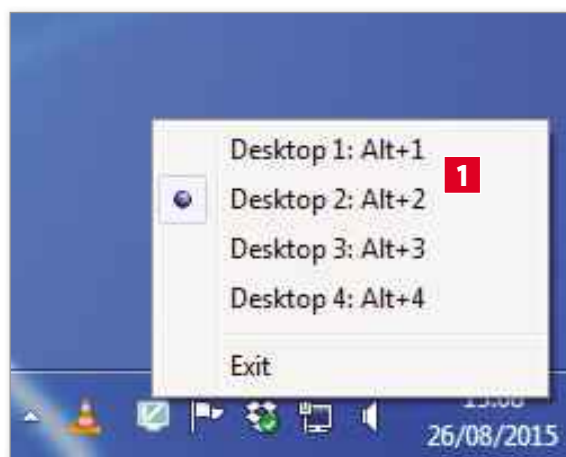
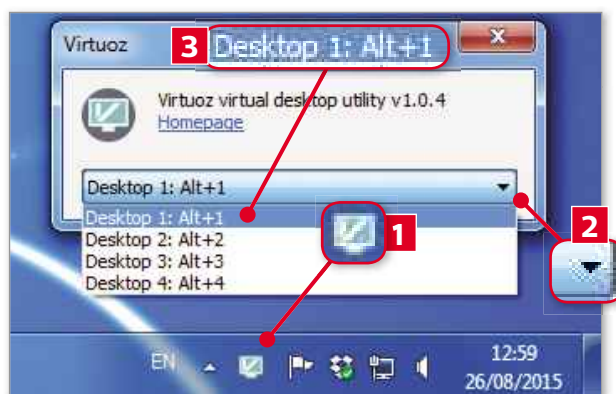
What you need: Virtuoz; Any version of Windows (XP to 10) **Time required:** 25 minutes

One of Windows 10's most useful new features is **virtual desktops**. This lets you open a group of files and/or programs on one virtual desktop, and a different group of items on another. It's a godsend if you like to compartmentalise your

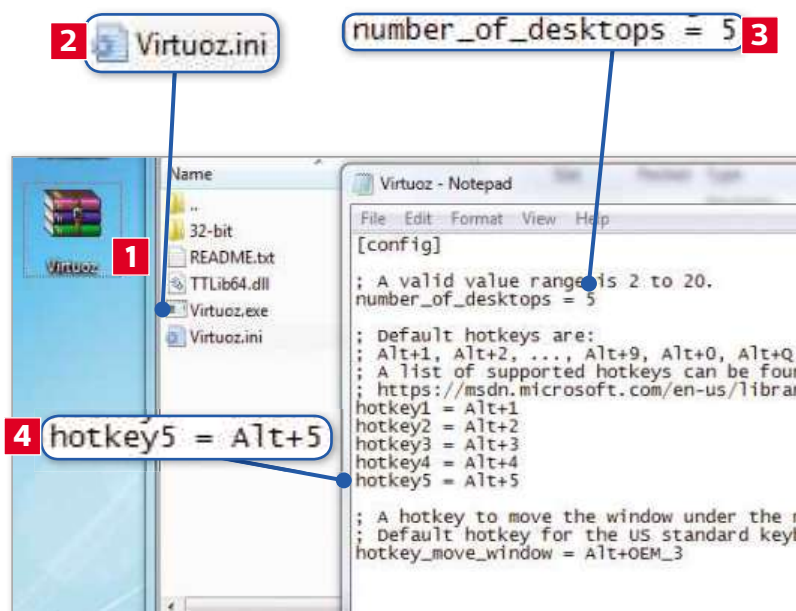
workspaces and operate in an uncluttered environment. Virtuoz is a free portable program that brings this feature to all versions of Windows. You can create up to 20 virtual desktops and switch to any of them using key combinations of your choice.



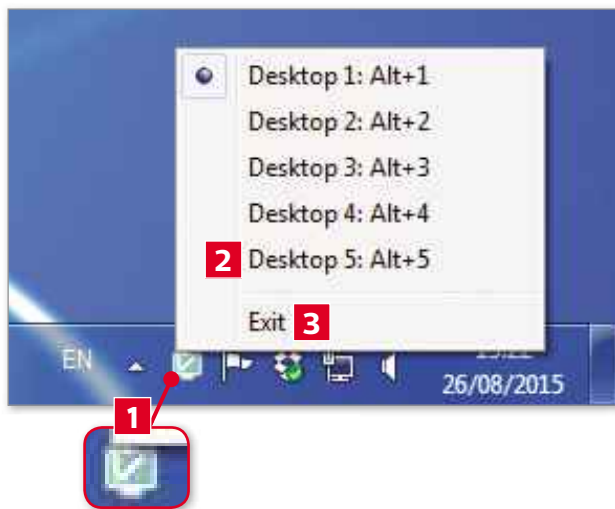
STEP 1 To download the program, go to www.snipca.com/17761 and click the 'virtuoz.zip' link below Download. Copy this zipped file from your Downloads folder and paste it to your Desktop for ease of access. Next, open the downloaded zipped file, click the 'Virtuoz.exe' setup file, then click Run. The Virtuoz icon **1** will appear in your Taskbar's notification area. Click it to open the program. You'll see a dropdown menu containing four virtual desktops **2**. Desktop 1 (selected by default) **3** is your main desktop. Open some programs and files on your PC.



STEP 2 Now click Desktop 2 in the dropdown menu (or use the keyboard shortcut 'Alt + 2'). You'll see a new virtual desktop with no files or programs open (except for Virtuoz). Now open a different set of files and programs on your second virtual desktop. Similarly, you can switch between any of the four virtual desktops. There are three ways to do this. You can click the Virtuoz icon, the dropdown menu and select another desktop. Alternatively, you can right-click the Virtuoz icon in your Taskbar, then select another Desktop **1**. Finally, you can also use the Alt + (number key) to switch to that one.

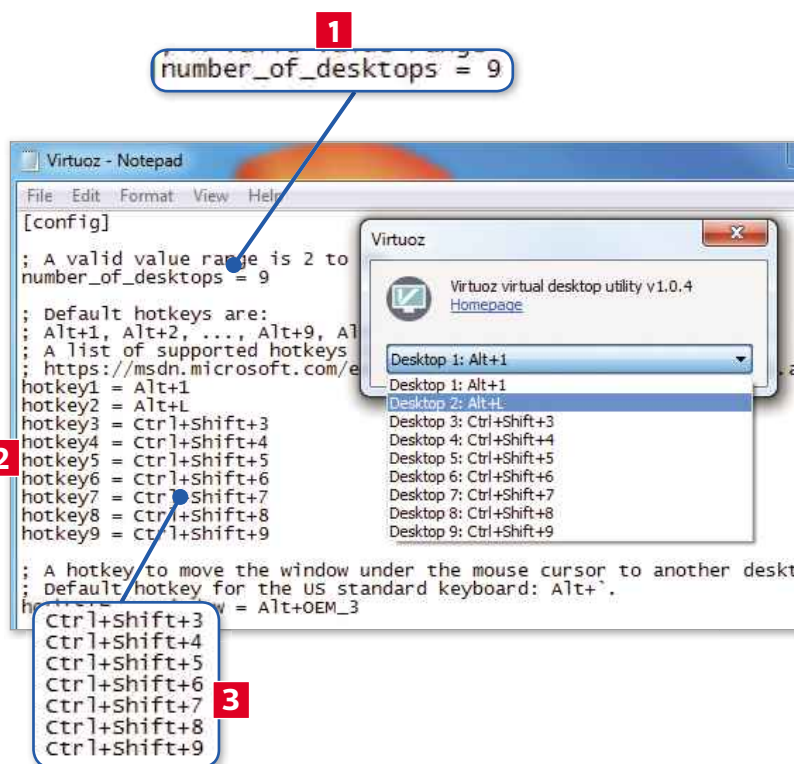
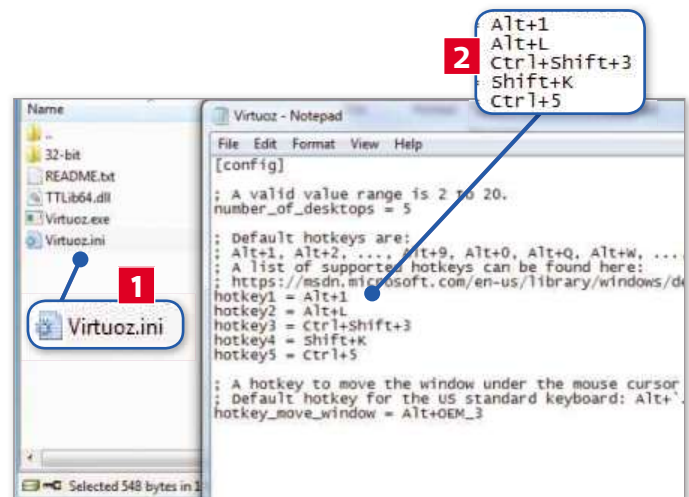


STEP 3 By default, Virtuoz lets you switch between four virtual desktops using the Alt+ (the number of your virtual desktop) keyboard shortcut. However, you can extend this to 20. First, switch to your main Desktop (Alt+1). Now open the Virtuoz zipped file **1**, then click the file named 'Virtuoz.ini' **2**. First, we'll add a fifth virtual desktop, with its own shortcut (Alt+5). In the Notepad file that opens, change the number of desktops to 5 **3** (it's 4 by default). Next, below the line 'hotkey4 = Alt+4' type **hotkey5 = Alt+5** **4**.



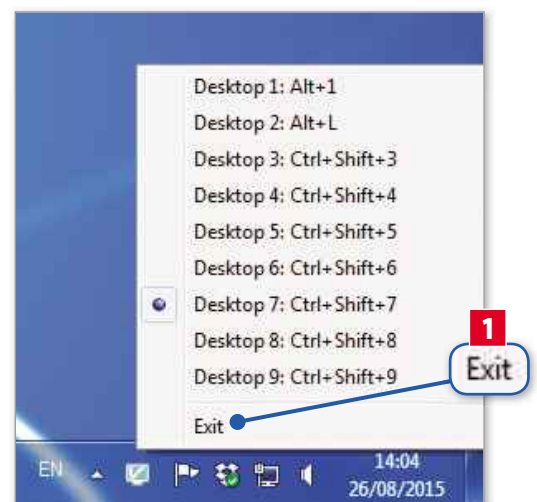
STEP 4 Now close the Notepad window, click Save, then Yes. Next, right-click the Virtuoz icon in your Taskbar **1** and you should see an entry (Desktop 5: Alt+5 **2**) for the fifth virtual desktop you added. If you don't see it, click Exit **3**, relaunch Virtuoz.exe from the zipped folder on your Desktop and click Run. Now right-click the Virtuoz Taskbar icon and you should now see the fifth virtual desktop you created. Try using the Alt+5 key combination to switch to that desktop and open a new set of programs and files on it.

STEP 5 You can change the default keyboard shortcuts if you want. First, re-open the 'Virtuoz.ini' **1**. Our screenshot shows possible modifier key+number/letter key combinations you can use **2** (but the choice is yours). Letters should always be typed as upper case (though you won't need to use Caps Lock when using the key combination). Ensure there are no spaces when you type your key combinations. Again, close the Notepad file, click Save, then Yes. Now right-click Virtuoz to see your new key combinations.



STEP 6 It's easy to increase the number of virtual desktops to anything up to 20 and add different key combinations for each. First, change the value in the number of desktops field at the top **1** to whatever you want. Ensure your key combination formatting is correct or Virtuoz may stop working. The safest way to do that is by copying and pasting the previous hotkey line, then changing the (hotkey) value **2** and adding your new keyboard shortcuts **3**.

STEP 7 Virtual desktops are great for compartmentalising your activities. However, you can easily forget which programs and files are open on which virtual desktop. If this happens, right-click the Virtuoz icon and click Exit **1**. You'll go to your main desktop (Desktop 1) and all the programs/files you've opened across other virtual desktops will automatically appear. Don't forget to relaunch Virtuoz (using its setup file) from the zipped file on your Desktop when you need to use it again. ●



Use superb new Kindle tools

What you need: Kindle e-reader (6th or 7th generation) **Time required:** 20 minutes

If you've bought a Kindle e-reader within the past two years, you'll probably have a model that's recently been updated with a raft of new features. These include a new default font called Bookerly.

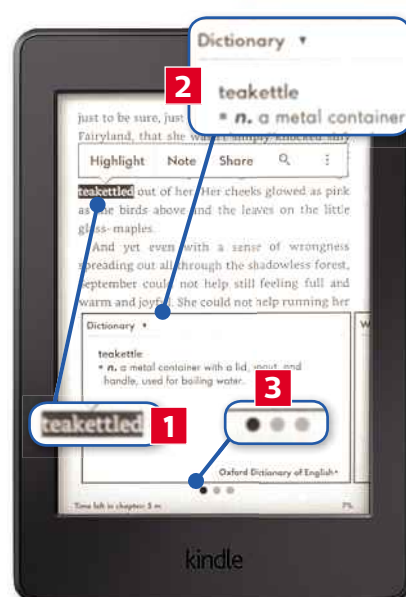
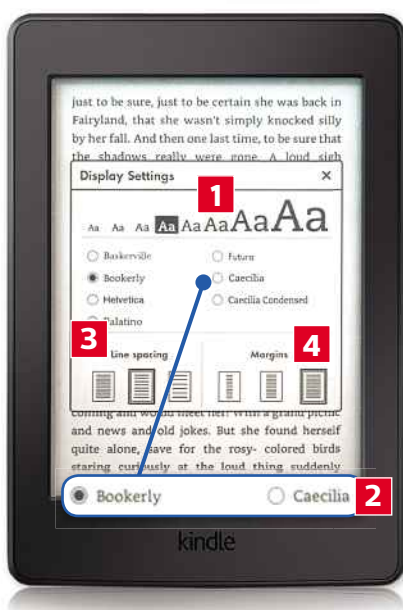
There are also better text-formatting features that will enhance your reading experience. Another superb new tool called Smart Lookup lets you look for the definition of any word or the meaning of a phrase with a simple long-press.



STEP 1 To update your e-reader, ensure it's connected to a Wi-Fi network. Next, tap the menu icon **1**, Settings, then the menu icon again. If you see the Update Your Kindle option **2** highlighted, tap it, then tap OK to update your device. Now repeat the steps above, then tap Device Info **3**. If you see a pop-up message saying you've got the latest update (5.6.5 – at the time of writing), it means you can use Kindle's new features. If you see an older e-reader update (5.6.1.1, for example) then you won't be able to use these features.



STEP 2 You'll notice that your text looks slightly different after the update. This is because Amazon has changed the default font to Bookerly, which makes text leaner and taller than the previous font Caecilia. We found it easier to read with the new font, but if you prefer the old one and want to switch back to it, then tap the top of the screen to bring up the Quick Settings menu and tap 'Aa' at the top left to open the Display Settings screen. New text-formatting options let you change your font size **1**, font type (select Caecilia) **2** and line spacing **3** and margin options **4**.



STEP 3 Smart Lookup is an excellent new feature that lets you find the definition of a word or phrase. Tap and hold a word to select it **1** (for a phrase, drag your finger to select it). You'll see its meaning (sourced from the Oxford English Dictionary) in the panel below **2**. Swipe the panel to the right **3** to see its Wikipedia definition. Swipe right again to see a Translation panel. To translate text, tap the From or To dropdown menu, swipe up the list of supported languages and select the ones you want. You'll see the translation in the panel below. Tap anywhere outside the panel to close it and continue reading.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
30 Sept

- Unlock Kaspersky 2016's hidden protection
- Sync passwords across devices for free
- Make your PC remember what you type
- Use Stephen Hawking's voice software

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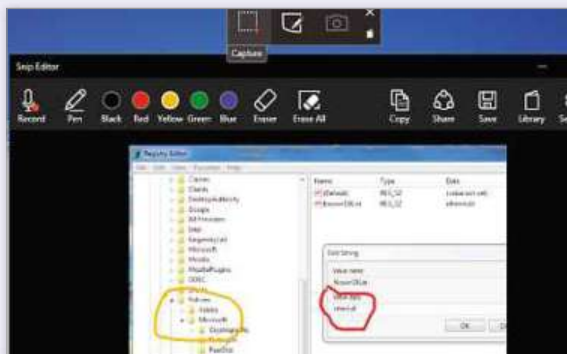
TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Describe a PC problem in detail using Microsoft's new Snip Editor screenshot program

I recently had a problem with an entry in my PC's Registry Editor and my son, who's in America for work, was not around to fix it. I wanted to send him a screenshot but it needed some detailed explanation to go with it.

Fortunately, I came across a new free Microsoft program called Snip Editor that lets you take a screenshot, annotate it and even add a voiceover if you want.

To install it, go to www.snipca.com/17870, click the orange Download Snip button, then run the setup file. Open the black Snip icon on your Desktop and you'll see a small menu with three options (see the top of the



screenshot above). Click the left option labelled Capture. A red border will appear around your screen and your cursor will change into a crosshairs symbol. Click and drag a rectangular

shape around the area of the screen you want to capture.

This will now appear within Snip Editor (see left). To annotate your screenshot, click the Pen option, choose a pointer size, select a colour from the top and draw over your screenshot. If you want to record a voiceover while annotating it, click the Record button at the top left.

To email your screenshot, click Share at the top right, then Email, and send it to whoever you want. Thanks to Snip Editor I could explain my problem in detail and my son was able to tell me how to rectify it.

Alfie Billings



The winner of every Tip of the Fortnight wins this exclusive Computeractive mug!

EMAIL

Turn off Outlook's new Clutter feature for good

I use Outlook 2013 and recently noticed a new folder called Clutter just below the Inbox option at the top left. I was initially concerned but then discovered that it's actually a new feature introduced by Microsoft for Office 2013 and Office 365 users.

Outlook analyses your inbox habits and automatically reroutes emails it thinks you're likely to ignore – those from a particular sender or with a particular title, for example – to the Clutter folder.

A good idea, you may think, but if like me you don't like it, you'll be frustrated to discover that trying to delete it will just see it reappear again a few days later.

The good news is there is a way to turn it off for good: go to www.snipca.com/

17871 and log into to your Outlook account. Now click the Settings cog at the top right, then Options. You'll see a list of dropdown menus on the left. Click Mail, 'Automatic processing', then Clutter (see screenshot below left). Select 'Don't separate items identified as clutter', then click Save at the top. Going forward, none of your emails will be directed to the Clutter folder.

Darren Gardner

BROWSER ADD-ON

Delay distracting tabs until you're free

Like many people I'm sure, I easily get distracted by news stories when I should be doing something important like online shopping or paying a bill. At least that was until a friend told me about a Chrome extension called Tab Snooze that has proved to be a godsend.

It lets you close potentially distracting tabs temporarily and choose when you want them to reappear (options include Later Today, This Evening, Tomorrow and This Weekend). To install it, go to www.tabssnooze.com, click Install Tab Snooze, then click 'Add extension'. You'll now see a crescent moon icon in your extensions toolbar – simply click it when you land on a story you want to read but can't

afford to get distracted by at that time, choose when you want it to reappear and it'll magically vanish until then.

Trevor Jenkins

PASSWORD-RETRIEVAL PROGRAM

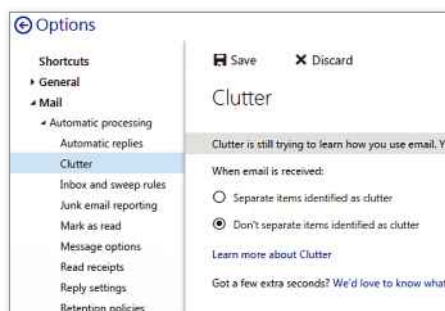
Retrieve forgotten web-based email passwords

I run my business from home and have at least four different email accounts set up on Internet Explorer and Chrome. However, I don't remember their passwords so I'm afraid to log out of them or clear my browsing data.

After some research, I found a new free program called SterJo Mail Passwords, which you can download from www.snipca.com/17872. It scans your browsers (Chrome, Opera, Internet Explorer and Firefox) for saved email account passwords from Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail and AOL and reveals them to you in a list.

Once you've downloaded it, run the setup file, then close your browsers, right-click SterJo Mail Passwords on your Desktop, click 'Run as administrator', then click Yes to open the program. To see your email passwords, click File at the top-left, then Show Mail Passwords. I've made a note of them in my personal diary so I don't forget them again!

Ben Wilson



Phone and Tablet Tips

Brilliant things to do on your device

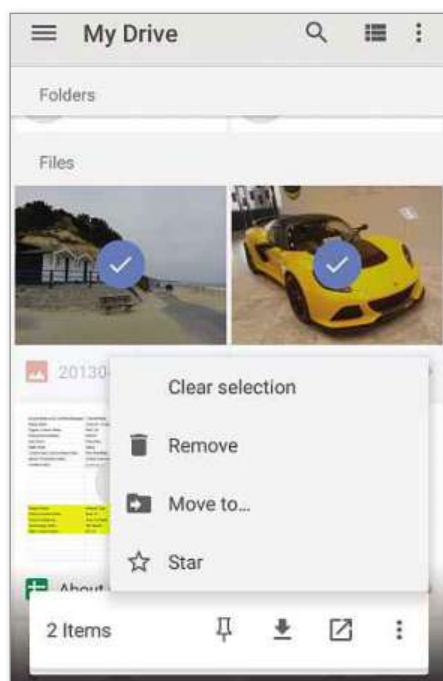
ANDROID

Move or download multiple items in one go



It is now easier than ever to download, delete or move multiple items in Google Drive. Previously, you had to open each item, then select what you did with it, but you can now apply an action to more than one item at the same time.

We'll show you how to move multiple items to a folder in your account, but the process is the same for downloading, sharing or deleting items. Open the app,



press and hold the first item you want to move until a blue tick appears and the new menu appears below (see screenshot below left). Now tap to select the other items you want to move. If you want to download these items to your device, tap the Download icon. You'll see a notification when that's completed. To share your selected items using third-party apps, tap the Share icon (an arrow inside a square) and select the app you want to use.

To move your selected items, tap the three dots at the bottom right, 'Move to' then select the folder you want. You can also tap Remove to delete those items from your account.

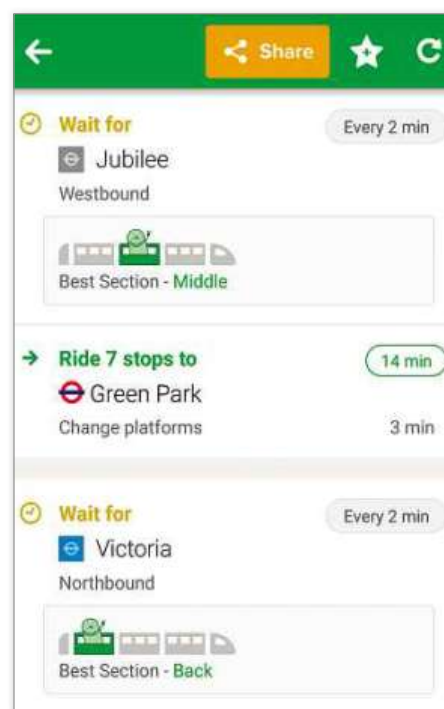
ANDROID & iOS

Reduce your journey time on the London Underground



Few apps can rival Google Maps, but free app Citymapper is a serious contender. While it only covers London, Birmingham and Manchester in the UK, its directions are often more detailed than Google Maps within these cities.

If you've ever used the London Underground, for example, you'll know how frustrating it is having to walk the entire length of a platform to exit the station or catch a connecting service. The latest update to Citymapper can save you precious time because it now also tells you which section (front, middle or back – see screenshot above right) of a



particular Tube train to board in order to alight at the nearest exit for your connecting service or the way out.

Open the app (Android www.snipca.com/17819; iOS www.snipca.com/17821), tap Get Me Somewhere, type your location (postcode or Tube stop), then tap the correct autosuggest option. If you're planning your journey in advance, tap the Time dropdown menu at the top right, then tap Set Arrival Time or Set Departure Time, according to your needs. Now set the time using the

Best New Apps

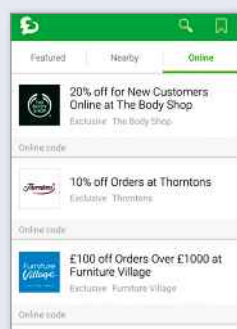
What you should install this fortnight

VoucherCodes.co.uk Free

Android: www.snipca.com/17823

iOS: www.snipca.com/17824

Like its associated website, this app helps you save money by giving you discount codes to use at over 2,500 UK restaurants

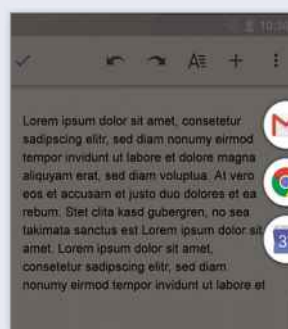


and stores. The iOS app now lets you set alerts for offers that are available around you (using GPS), while the Android app lets you share an offer with others via email.

Pintasking Free

Android: www.snipca.com/17825

Windows PCs let you 'pin' your favourite programs to the Taskbar for quick access. Pintasking brings the same feature to Android by letting you pin apps you use often as



floating icons on your homescreen. You can also save multiple links to your default browser app without having to open it.

Videoshop – Video Editor £1.49

Android, iOS and Windows Phone:

www.snipca.com/17503

New to Windows Phones, this app gives you advanced video-editing tools that your device lacks. It lets you trim videos,



combine multiple clips, and add filters, effects and background music from your device. You can also record voiceovers and create your own subtitles.

sliders, tap Set, then tap Get Route at the bottom.

You'll now see the various modes of transport available to you, including Tube routes. Tap to select the fastest Tube route, then swipe up to see how regularly trains are expected. For each Tube connection, you'll see the section of the train you should board so that you alight nearest to the exit you need.

iOS

Change Outlook's default browser for links within emails



Microsoft Outlook (www.snipca.com/17822) is one of the best free email apps for iOS. In the wake of a recent update, the app now lets you change the default browser that opens when you tap a link within an email. Previously, you could only open web links in Safari, but you can now choose from Chrome, Dolphin or Opera (all available for free in the App Store).

First, ensure the browser app you want to use for links is installed on your device. Next, open Outlook, tap Settings at the bottom right, then tap the new Browser option. You'll see a list of all the browser apps installed on your device. Simply tap to select the one you want to use for opening links.

iOS

Stop Apple Music charging you beyond the free trial period



If you like the idea of Spotify and use an iOS device, then you may be tempted by Apple's new free music-streaming service called Apple Music. The iOS app was launched in July. The service is free for the first three months, then £9.99 per month, which is automatically debited from your Apple account. We'll show you how to set up the app and turn off the Auto Renewal feature, so you are not charged beyond the trial period.

The Apple Music app – which works in a similar way to Spotify's app – will automatically appear on your homescreen when you update to the latest version of iOS (8.4.1, at the time of writing). To check your version and update your device, tap Settings, General, then Software Update. Tap Update if there's one pending.

Next, open Apple Music on your homescreen, tap Start 3 Month Free Trial, Individual, then enter your Apple password. Tap Continue, verify

your credit-card details, type your three-digit security code, then tap Done. After a few minutes you'll see a list of all the tracks you've bought on iTunes in alphabetical order (of artists) on the left, with track thumbnails on the right.

To stop the service automatically charging you after the trial period, tap the account icon (outline of a person) at the top left, View Apple ID, then tap Manage below Subscriptions. Now tap the Auto Renewal slider at the bottom to turn it off, tap Turn Off, then Done at the top. You'll still be able to use the service for free until your trial period ends.

WINDOWS PHONE

Take a screenshot quickly



As with Android and iOS devices, Windows Phones let you use a combination of your device's physical buttons to take a screenshot. To do this, simply press and hold the volume up button and power button simultaneously until you see your screen blink. You'll then see a 'Saving to Screenshots' message in your notification panel. Now open the Photos app to view your saved screenshot. Tap the circular icon at the bottom left to see options for sharing it using compatible apps (such as email and text messaging).

Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Shape Gurus

£1.49 www.snipca.com/17828 (iOS)

The games in this app will help your toddler learn to identify shapes. They need to match shapes to the correct outline, drag and drop them to the correct box then tap to select the odd shape out. There are 27 puzzles featuring four shapes and nine colours.



AGES 6-10

Archaeologist: Jurassic Life

Free www.snipca.com/17829 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/17830 (iOS)

This archaeological game will take your child back to the Jurassic period. They need to tap marked areas to dig and collect the prehistoric creatures' skeletal remains. They then have to match the bones to the correct outline, after which they'll be able to read useful information about that species of dinosaur.



AGES 11-16

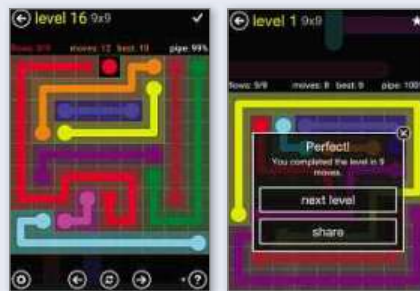
Flow Free

Free www.snipca.com/17832 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/17833 (iOS)

Free www.snipca.com/17834 (Windows Phone)

You may have seen fellow commuters scratching their heads playing this. The aim is to join dots of the same colour, ensuring that you cover all the squares on a grid. It quickly gets challenging as the number of squares increase. Aim for a 'Perfect score' by completing each level in the minimum number of moves.



WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

View your Wi-Fi password



In Issue 455, we showed you how to view your PC's Wi-Fi password on a Windows 8.1 machine using the Command Prompt. Doing so means you can avoid having to check the back of your router – useful if you regularly share access to your Wi-Fi network with other people. However, there's an even easier way to find out your Wi-Fi password.



Simply right-click the Wi-Fi icon in the notification area of your Taskbar, then click 'Open Network and Sharing Center'. Now click the Wi-Fi network you're connected to on the right (the name in blue in the Connections field – see screenshot above). In the Wi-Fi Status window, click the Wireless Properties button, then the Security tab. Your password is displayed as dots in the 'Network security key' field to keep it from being openly visible. Tick 'Show characters' and it will be revealed.

WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Remove ATI Catalyst Control Center from your context menu



Right-click any blank area on your Desktop. If you're using an AMD processor with a specific type of graphics card, the first option you'll see is ATI Catalyst Control Center. If this is something you never use and you're sick of seeing it at the top of every right-click (context) menu, you can easily remove it.

Press the Windows key+R to bring up the Run dialogue box, type **regedit** then press Enter to open your Registry Editor. Navigate to the following key using the dropdown menus on the left: **HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\Directory\Background\Shellex\ContextMenuHandlers\ACE**.

Next, double-click the Default key on the right. You'll see a long 'Value data' field which looks something like this

WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Use ClickLock to select and move items more easily



If you find it difficult to click and hold your right mouse button, then drag to select items – for example, to select many lines of text or to click and move items to different areas of your PC – there's an easy mouse setting you can enable to make the process easier.

It's called ClickLock, and you can access it by pressing the Start button, typing **mouse**, then clicking the first option that appears. In the Mouse Properties window, tick 'Turn on ClickLock' at the bottom. Don't close the window yet, because we'll show you how to adjust the sensitivity of the setting later.

Now open any Word document you've saved. Click and hold the right button on your mouse for about two seconds, then leave it. Now move your cursor up or down and you'll notice any text you move over will be selected. Click the right mouse button again at the point where you want the selection to end. You can use a similar method to



move items on your PC. To do this, press and hold the Shift key then click to select the items you want to move. Now simply right-click any of the selected items for about two seconds and drag them wherever you want.

If you want to increase or decrease the initial two-second wait for the click-and-hold function to activate, return to the ClickLock window in Mouse Properties, click the Settings button and move the slider to the left or right (see screenshot above). When you're happy with your settings, click OK followed by Apply, then OK again.

'{5E2121....}'. Simply add a few dashes to the start of the field, so that it reads '---{5E2121....}', then click OK. Now close the Registry Editor and restart your PC. When Windows has loaded, right-click on the Desktop and the Catalyst option will be gone.

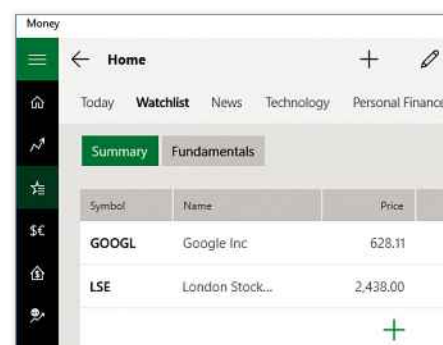
WINDOWS 8, 10

Track companies on the stock market



The Money app in Windows 8 and 10 lets you follow companies you're interested in on the stock market. Press the Start button, type **money**, then click to open the Money app. In Windows 8.1, swipe to the right to see the Watchlist section. In Windows 10, click the star icon with four lines on the left, then click the Watchlist tab (see screenshot above right).

Now click the '+' button and type the symbol of the company you want to



follow. For example, type **lse** for the London Stock Exchange, then click the correct autosuggest option. To add further companies you want to follow, click the '+' button again and repeat the process. You can now click any of the companies you added to see a graph of how its stock has fared on that day. Below the graph are options to set the period you want the graph to cover, including a week, month or year.

ONENOTE

Add spreadsheets to OneNote and edit them using Excel

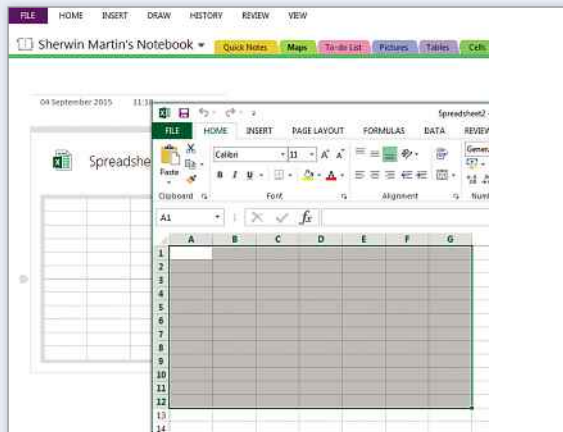


There are several ways you can add Excel spreadsheets into

OneNote. To add a spreadsheet already saved on your PC, click the Insert tab followed by the Spreadsheet dropdown menu, then click Existing Excel Spreadsheet. Navigate to the file you want to insert and click OK.

You'll see three options: Attach File lets you attach an entire file to your note; Insert Spreadsheet lets you insert just the data within an Excel spreadsheet; and 'Insert a Chart or Table' lets you do the same with just a chart or table.

After you've imported the spreadsheet, double-click its title and it



will open in an Excel window. You can now make any changes you want in Excel, then close the spreadsheet, changes will be applied to your data

within OneNote without changing the original Excel file.

To add an empty spreadsheet to OneNote, click the Insert tab, then the Spreadsheet dropdown menu, and click New Excel Spreadsheet. You'll see an empty table inserted into your note. To add data to it using Excel's powerful editing tools, click the table, then click the Edit button at the top left. A new Excel window will open and you'll see a section of it highlighted (see screenshot). Now simply make the changes you want within this section in Excel, close the Excel window and click Save. Whatever data you've added will automatically appear within your note.

OUTLOOK.COM

Apply rules to all emails from a particular sender in one go



Instead of having to select unwanted emails and delete them or mark them as Junk each time they arrive, Outlook.com's powerful Sweep rules let you set instructions to apply to a particular sender in the future.



First select all the unwanted emails from that sender, then click the Sweep option at the top. Four possible courses of action will appear, including the option to delete the emails from your inbox and block all future correspondence from the sender (see screenshot above). You can also choose to keep only the most recent email, but delete all earlier ones, which is useful for weekly or monthly newsletters that tend to clog up your inbox over time. Choose your desired option, then click Sweep to apply the changes.

You can speed up the process further by simultaneously applying the rules to multiple senders. Simply select all their emails in your inbox, click Sweep at the

top, select the rule you want to apply, then click Sweep and your choice will be applied to all the senders.

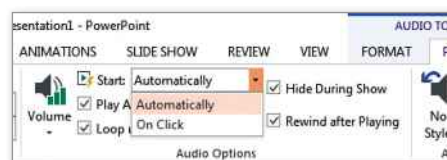
POWERPOINT

Play background music during your presentation



One simple way to enhance any PowerPoint presentation is to add some background music that will play on a loop. Click the Insert tab, then the Audio dropdown menu at the top right, and select 'Audio on My PC'. Navigate to your desired track, then click Insert.

By default the track is added to the slide that's currently active, meaning it'll play only when that slide appears in your presentation. To use it as background music throughout the presentation, click the Playback tab, then select 'Play in Background' at the top right. Use the options in the Start dropdown menu to select whether you want the track to start playing automatically or with a mouse click. To automatically loop the track, tick 'Rewind after Playing' (see below). The other boxes will be ticked by default when you select 'Play in Background'.



WORD

Protect sensitive Word documents with a password



If you have documents containing sensitive details (such as bank details or passwords, for example), it makes sense to password-protect them to keep their contents safe from unwanted eyes.

There are two ways to do this – in both cases you need to have the document open on screen. The first option is to click File at the top left, then the Protect Document dropdown button in the middle, and finally 'Encrypt with Password'. Now type and confirm your password, clicking OK each time, then again to apply the changes. Close the file, and it'll ask for a password the next time you (or anyone else) try to access it.

The second way is by clicking File at the top left followed by Save As, then navigating to the folder where you want to save your file. However, before clicking Save (at the bottom right), click the Tools dropdown menu at the bottom, then General Options. You'll see two fields: 'Password to open' and 'Password to modify'. The first controls access to the file itself, while the second lets you restrict the ability to make changes to it. You can set the same password for both or different ones for each, or set a password for only one of the two by leaving the other field blank.



Your second monitor

Extend the Taskbar across all displays, find a lost cursor and save time with keyboard shortcuts

Speed up navigation

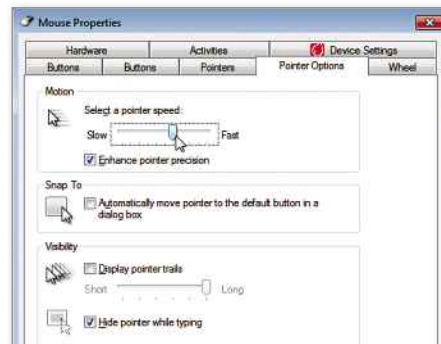
One downside to multiple-monitor setups is having to push the mouse that bit further to get around the extended Desktop. Thankfully, Windows can help. Click Start (followed by Run in XP), type **main.cpl** and press Enter. Select the Pointer Options tab then drag the Motion slider to the right (see screenshot right) to speed up how quickly your cursor travels across your screen. Also, tick the 'Enhance pointer precision' box, as this will ensure the fastest movement only when Windows detects you're trying to move the cursor over a long distance.

Locate a lost cursor

Followed the tip above? Well, while you're on the Pointer Options tab you might want to tick the 'Show location of pointer when I press the CTRL key'. Next time you lose track of your cursor on your multi-monitored Windows Desktop, tap Control (Ctrl) and it will be fleetingly highlighted by a cross-hairs symbol.

Make multi-screen set up work more naturally

Setting up a second (or even a third)



Speed up your cursor's motion so it moves more quickly between multiple monitors

monitor is pretty easy but did you know that you can fine-tune Windows' display settings to better suit your screens' setup? This is really useful if your monitors aren't perfectly adjacent. Using multiple displays feels more natural when you aren't moving your cursor off an edge into a space where no screen 'exists'. Click Start (followed by Run in XP), then type **desk.cpl** and press Enter. Under 'Change the appearance of your display', drag and drop the display thumbnails to mirror their physical arrangement. If you need help figuring out which is which, click Identify.

Extend your Taskbar

If you're using Windows 8.1 or 10, you can stretch the Windows Desktop's Taskbar so that it spans all your displays. Right-click the Taskbar, choose Properties and then, in the 'Multiple displays' section, tick 'Show taskbar on all displays'. Use the dropdown menu below to set how and where Taskbar buttons appear. For those using Windows 7 or XP, read the box below to find out how to extend your Taskbar.

Use keyboard shortcuts to navigate screens faster

Committing a couple of much-used keyboard shortcuts to memory will dramatically speed up how you work across your extended Desktop. The most useful shortcut is Windows key+Shift+left or right arrow (cursor) key. This will instantly transport the current program window to the same position on the monitor to the left or right.

The second useful shortcut is Windows key+P, which lets you duplicate or extend the Windows Desktop, or disable one or other screen by tapping to cycle through to the option you want. This is designed primarily for people using a projector or connecting a PC to an **HDMI** TV. However, it also works with any combination of displays.

Speed up Windows

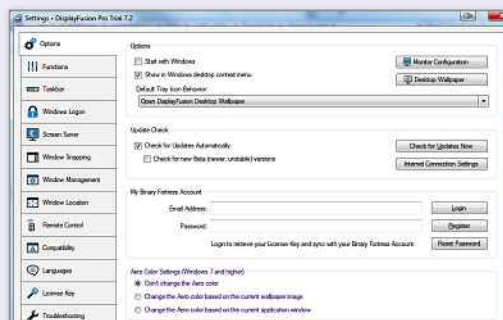
When you have more than one display connected, your **graphics card** and Windows have to work that little bit harder, so things might slow down a tad. If you notice this, you can inject a bit of speed by reducing the colour depth.

Click Start (followed by Run in XP), type **desk.cpl** and press Enter. Next, click 'Advanced settings' and select the Monitor tab. Open the Colors dropdown menu and choose 'High Color (16 bit)'. Unless you're editing photos, you probably won't even notice the reduction in colours (from a billion to just under 17 million).

Enhance your display settings

Windows handles multiple displays pretty well, but there's always room for improvement, which is why there are loads of handy tools from third-party developers.

The free version of DisplayFusion (www.displayfusion.com – see screenshot), for example, is crammed with nifty enhancements, including clever techniques for snapping windows into position and extra buttons in program windows for quick organisation.



MultiMon (www.snipca.com/17575) is a little more basic, but the free version will extend the Taskbar across multiple displays – great if you use Windows 7 or XP.

G.fast

Want 330Mbps broadband? You'd better move to Huntingdon sharpish

What is it?

A new type of broadband technology being tested by BT that can provide speeds of 330Mbps, over 10 times the national average and twice that of Virgin's fastest package. After researching G.fast for eight years, BT has begun a public trial to see how well it works. Joe Garner, CEO of BT Openreach, says it represents "the start of a new chapter in building Britain's connected future".

Sounds exciting. Can I be part of the trial?

Only if you live in Huntingdon. At the end of August, 2,000 homes and businesses in the Cambridgeshire town were hooked up to G.fast, the largest trial of its type in the world, BT claims. The trial will run for six to nine months, during which BT will analyse how people and companies use it. It will later be extended to Swansea, Gosforth and Newcastle.

When will it be available nationwide?

Not for a while. BT says that if the Huntingdon trial is successful, speeds of around 300Mbps will be available to "millions of homes" by 2020. Within a decade G.fast could even deliver speeds up to 500Mbps.

How does it work?

It's a cross between fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) broadband and fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP). FTTC delivers broadband via fast fibre cables, but only as far as BT's street-based cabinets. From there, copper cables take over, slowing the speed to a maximum of 80Mbps (which is still pretty fast). FTTP bypasses copper cables by continuing fibre to the home, hitting speeds of 330Mbps, though it has the ability to reach beyond 1Gbps.

With G.fast, BT can squeeze more capacity out of its copper cables. The high-capacity fibre cable is moved closer to the customer's home, although not right to the front door. Instead, the cable



is run from the local fibre cabinet to a smaller piece of hardware (called a distribution node) that can be fitted to a telegraph pole or installed underground. The last stretch of the connection still relies on slow copper, but over a *shorter* distance than before, maintaining more of the speed that's lost with FTTC.

G.fast means BT will be able to offer fast broadband to more premises than if it stuck solely with FTTP.

Will I need to be a BT customer to get it?

No, because it's being run by BT Openreach, which manages the company's broadband infrastructure. Almost all ISPs (Virgin being the notable exception) pay BT to use this network, which should allow them to provide G.fast to their customers.

What does the G stand for?

Nothing interesting. It's the letter G in the ITU-T G series of recommendations for how digital transmissions are sent (see them all on Wikipedia: www.snipca.com/17751). Still, 'G.fast' does sound

speedy and futuristic, a bit like 'g-force', so you can see why it was chosen. The marketing managers of ISPs will love it.

So is this the 'super'-fast broadband everyone talks about?

Oh no, it's *much* better than that. BT calls it 'ultra'-fast broadband, as shown in the company's URL for its G.fast website: www.ultrafast-openreach.co.uk. Who knows where this broadband-speed inflation will end? Mega-ultra-super-duper-fast, maybe?

Do I really need 330Mbps broadband?

BT will spend millions trying to convince you so, not least so they can put its prices up. It says the speeds will let you "stream live ultra-high-definition 4K video content to multiple devices at once". Even better, you'll be able to do this while simultaneously "browsing the web, uploading videos and photos, or playing online games". But if all you do online is play solitaire, read the news and send emails, you don't need 33Mbps, let alone 330Mbps.

Software YOU MUST UNINSTALL

NOW!

Programs don't have to be malware to devastate your PC. Jane Hoskyn reveals the software you must remove now – before it turns against you

Software. Sounds nice, doesn't it? Soft, sweet and friendly. Not at all like viruses, worms, **rootkits** and other nefarious creatures of the night that are out to steal your money or secrets or both.

But good software can go bad, often

simply because it's old – it's a bit like food. Food that's perfectly delicious and healthy one day can wreak havoc in your tummy the next. Software has use-by dates, too, and if you continue using a program that's "gone off" your PC won't thank you for it.

Software – of any vintage – can also acquire dangerous flaws. Certain types of program, notably **plug-ins**, are especially vulnerable to developing holes that hackers use to funnel malware into your hard drive. Think of ants marching into your larder through a tiny hole in the wall.

Spot and stop software before it goes bad

Flash is the most timely example of a program that's got more holes than a

rifle range. We know you know Flash is a problem, but it's only now that companies like Google, Firefox and Amazon are realising it too.

Flash's near-constant flaws have now reached such a level of urgency, and it's such a perfect example of a once-great program turning into an unexploded bomb in your PC, that we've kicked off our feature with it. But it's not quite *the* most dangerous program (or even plug-in) on your PC, so we've also assembled a Top 12 chart of offenders, in order of danger to your PC (see box left).

We'll also cover less familiar software that have become favourite conduits for hackers distributing malware and spyware – it may be happening in your PC right now.

WHAT YOU MUST REMOVE

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1 BitTorrent | 6 CamStudio |
| 2 MyPC Backup | 7 Flash |
| 3 Free YouTube Downloader | 8 Binkiland |
| 4 Java | 9 Wajam |
| 5 Freemake Video Converter | 10 Hola |
| | 11 Thunderbird |
| | 12 iTunes |



REMOVE OUT-OF-DATE SOFTWARE THAT HACKERS LOVE

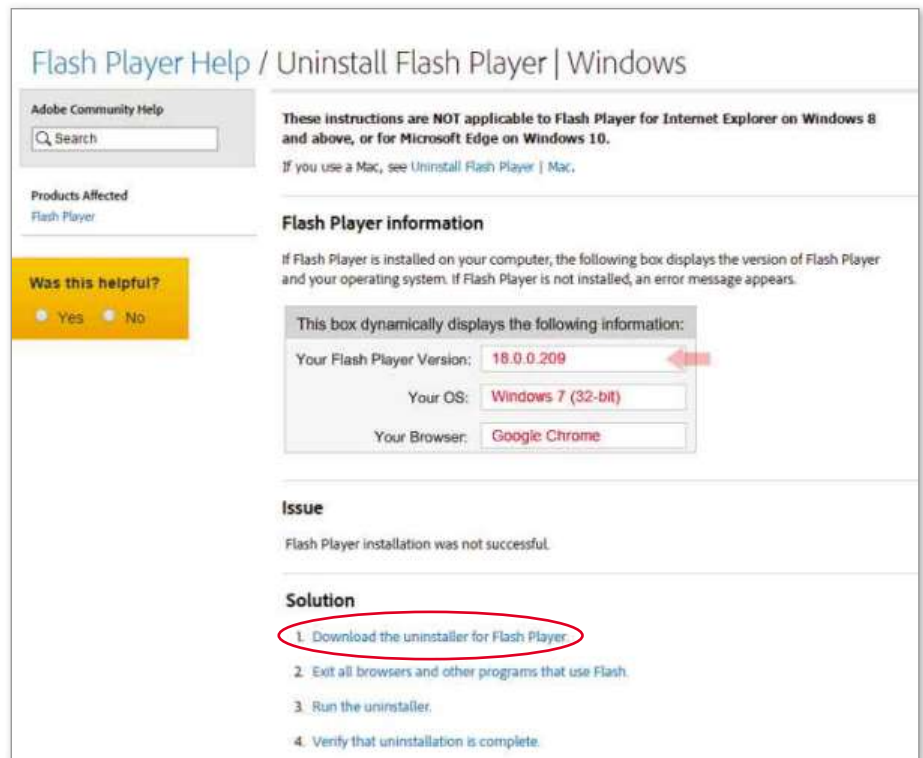
Ditch Flash for good...

Flash – aargh! Sorry, couldn't resist. Adobe Flash Player, to give this infernal browser plug-in its full name, has to be patched so often we're amazed it still exists. If your roof was made out of sticking plasters, you wouldn't feel terribly confident living underneath it – and Flash is basically a roof made of sticking plasters.

Flash, like other plug-ins, is a small and simple piece of software that hackers can easily embed with malware, and then set the malware to infect your PC automatically as soon as the Flash video or advert plays in your browser.

Many Flash adverts play automatically, so you can see why the plug-in is such a security problem – and instances of this so-called 'malvertising' tripled in 2014 (see Protect Your Tech, page 14). Hackers love Flash, and Adobe is really struggling to keep up with the bad guys. Adobe has long since given up releasing Flash security fixes separately, because there are so many of them.

Sometimes we wonder why on earth Adobe – which produces some of the world's best software, including Lightroom and Photoshop – doesn't just put this embarrassing plug-in out of its (and our) misery. Many platforms have ditched it already. As long ago as 2010, Apple banned Flash from iPhones and iPads. YouTube dropped it for the safer (and less memory-hungry) **HTML5** in January, and Amazon has since banned Flash adverts from its site. Firefox has blocked Flash altogether since July, shortly after the plug-in suffered its third **zero-day vulnerability** (yes, 'zero-day' is as apocalyptic as it sounds).



Check your Flash Player version or get rid of it altogether using the Adobe site

The consensus seems to be that Flash is a dastardly piece of rubbish that has no place on any sensible person's computer. You can get it off your PC using Adobe's own uninstaller (www.snipca.com/17805, click 'Download the uninstaller for Flash Player' – see screenshot above). If you don't watch much online video, Flash's absence won't make much difference to you, but it will keep your PC safer and may even make it faster.

...Or keep Flash – but make it safe

Flash isn't all bad. Some of the internet's most inspiring and exciting sites rely on

Flash. For example, We Choose The Moon (<http://wechoosethemoon.org>), an amazing interactive recreation of the Apollo 11 Lunar landing, would be impossible to view if you uninstalled Flash.

There are ways to keep using Flash while minimising its dangers. First, crucially, enable 'Click to Play' in your browser (you'll find this in your settings). Once enabled, Flash is paused by default and only plays when you choose, either by right-clicking or pressing Ctrl+click (see screenshot left).

Just before we went to press, Google announced it would pause Flash adverts by default in Chrome from mid-September (www.snipca.com/17803). You can still play a Flash video, but any "non-central" Flash content will be automatically frozen. This wise move helps to prevent the auto-play malvertising we mentioned above.

If you have a desktop PC and a laptop, you could remove Flash completely from the PC and keep it on the laptop (as long as the laptop runs Windows 7 or later). Make sure to enable 'Click to Play' on the laptop.

You must also be meticulous about keeping Flash updated. Download it from Adobe (<https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer>), then double-check you have the latest version (www.snipca.com/17807).



'Click to Play' settings give you control over when Flash can and can't run

Give up your Java habit

Flash may be getting all the headlines, but Java – also used to power interactive and animated content – is even more dangerous. This is partly because “updating” Java (www.snipca.com/17831) doesn’t remove old versions from your computer, so your hard drive could contain a disastrous collection of old versions and components that hackers are happily exploiting.

What’s more, Java content (such as games and simulators) tends to absorb your attention for longer than Flash content (mostly brief video clips). That means hackers have more time to attack you. If Flash is like leaving your front door open for half an hour, Java is like leaving it open all day. Given enough time, hackers can easily find a flaw and use it to install malware or, worse, a rootkit that runs constantly and invisibly.

There is a silver lining to all this. Java’s notoriety means it’s fallen out of favour with software makers and users, so the number of attacks has fallen too. In 2013, Java flaws were responsible for a staggering 91 per cent of all computer attacks (www.snipca.com/17810); that number halved last year – but that’s still rather high.



The Minecraft community hated the game’s reliance on Java – happily now fixed

In the main, Java owes its continued existence to one of the world’s best-loved computer games, Minecraft. Minecraft’s dependence on Java made players vulnerable to zero-day attacks, rootkits and other exploits beloved of Java’s predators.

In March 2015, the game’s developers finally came to their senses and created a standalone version of Java, embedded in a Minecraft launcher that you can download for free (<https://minecraft.net/download>). It’s hermetically sealed from



Java began as a useful platform for interactive content, but soon became the favourite target of hackers

your operating system, **sandbox**-style, to keep you safe from harm. Minecraft no longer requires the standard version of Java, so there’s now no excuse for having it on your machine.

First, disable it in your browser. Find detailed instructions for Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer (IE) and Opera here: www.snipca.com/17813. Then uninstall Java from your PC. You can do this using Windows’ built-in uninstaller, but that won’t get rid of leftover junk files – some of which may be the very files hackers have been exploiting or even installed in the first place. What’s more, there may be numerous versions of Java on your PC, and they all need removing, so a batch-uninstaller such as IObit Uninstaller is more appropriate (see the box opposite for our favourite uninstalling tools).

Let Thunderbird fly

Email program Thunderbird used to be almost as popular as its sister browser Firefox, also made by Mozilla. But while Firefox is holding its own (just) against stiff competition, poor old Thunderbird has been shot down and is full of holes.

Look at Mozilla’s list of security advisories for Thunderbird (www.snipca.com/17815), and check back regularly if you’re a Thunderbird user. It makes for an alarming read. ‘Arbitrary file overwriting’, ‘Miscellaneous memory



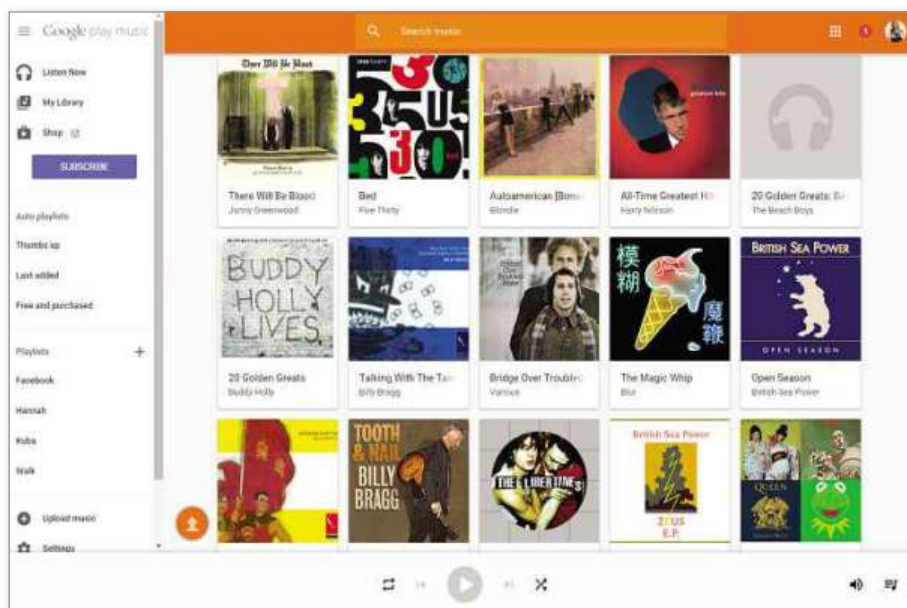
Mozilla’s email program Thunderbird needs so many security fixes it’s no longer worth using



safety hazards', 'Privilege escalation through Web Notification' (a flaw that gives any passing hacker more privileges than you) – and all this in only the past few months. Worryingly, some flaws keep reappearing despite regular fixes. Really, is it worth it? We don't think so. If you use Thunderbird, export any data you want to keep and switch to a new email service.

It's a sad story. A few years ago, Thunderbird was considered a safer alternative to Microsoft's Outlook Express, which had more patches than a Victorian quilt. Thunderbird was also faster, more innovative and – quite frankly – cooler. But while Outlook has evolved into a cross-platform tool whose free online version successfully borrows the best elements of Gmail, including seamless integration with online tools such as Office Online and Google Drive, Thunderbird is stuck in the past.

Some antivirus (AV) tools, including the excellent Norton Security (www.snipca.com/17817) have even identified Thunderbird as a Trojan (www.snipca.com/17826). This is a **false-positive** – Thunderbird itself is not malicious. However, it's so full of vulnerabilities that perhaps these over-zealous AVs are wise to block it.



Google Play Music came as a blessed relief to anyone fed up with iTunes' problems and restrictions

Dump iTunes

You don't have to look far online for horror stories about lost iTunes music libraries, disappearing album art and corrupted files. Then there were the problems (teething troubles, if we want to be kind) with iTunes Match and the new Apple Music service.

Over the past year, the Windows version of iTunes has been updated

dozens of times in attempts to fix this mess, and to patch security flaws. Meanwhile, Apple claims to take security so "seriously" that it's quick to lock you out of your account if you forget your password, reset it and then forget what you reset it to. Which, let's be honest, is easy to do. Oh, and some Windows 10 users have found that iTunes won't even recognise their iPhones and iPads.

iTunes cultivated hostility early on by attempting to make itself compulsory. It applied device-based restrictions and ignored the simple drag-and-drop process that made sense to young internet users (for whom drag-and-drop is second nature) and us old-timers (who miss our compilation tapes). Apple took away your control – and it's now taking away your safety and your music, or at least moving it to somewhere you can't find it.

Ten years ago, you didn't have much choice, but now there are loads of free alternatives that work across multiple platforms and let you control your files. We like the simplicity of Foobar2000 (www.foobar2000.org/download), which now has versions for Android, iOS, Windows Phone and Windows (PC). It's free and safe and has a great, supportive website.

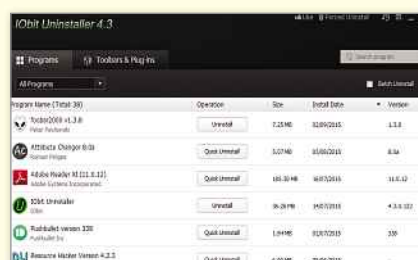
If you're on Android or PC, Google Play Music (<https://music.google.com>) is a must-have. It's free and gives you plenty of storage space. It syncs seamlessly between your computer, phone and tablet, lets you edit file info as much as you like, supports playlists and even has a Spotify-style streaming tool. The iOS version (www.snipca.com/17835) is not as good, but it's still a decent iTunes alternative. ►

ESSENTIAL SOFTWARE-REMOVAL TOOLKIT

IObit Uninstaller

www.snipca.com/17838

Three cheers to IObit for removing the **PUPs** that used to plague this program's setup wizard. It's now our top choice for uninstalling multiple programs, force-removing programs and **plug-ins** that just refuse to budge, and automatically cleaning out any leftovers (see screenshot). It integrates with your built-in Windows uninstaller, too.



Ninite

<https://ninite.com>

Free online tool that lets you update all your installed programs and plug-ins in one go. The new downloadable Ninite Updater (<https://ninite.com/updater>) automatically updates all your installed tools – well worth \$9.99 (£6.53) a year.

AdwCleaner

www.snipca.com/17839

After you've removed any program, even with a powerful tool like IObit Uninstaller, always run AdwCleaner to find and remove malicious leftovers in your Registry, browsers and hard drive.

GeekUninstaller

www.geekuninstaller.com

The free version is our favourite portable tool for quick uninstall jobs. Keep it on a USB stick for getting rubbish off XP and Vista PCs.

BCUninstaller

www.snipca.com/17837

This new kid on the block has a 'Simulate uninstallation' option that lets you test how a program's removal would affect your PC before you go through with it.

Computeractive Bookstore

NEW!

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10



This 148-page book is the only guide you need on Microsoft's new operating system. You'll learn how to master all the new tools, lock Microsoft's weak privacy settings and prevent future updates from wrecking your PC. It includes fixes for all the problems and bugs that have appeared in Windows 10 since it launched. Plus, you'll discover how to make Cortana understand you, remove the apps you hate, fix the dreaded Reboot Loop problem, master the new Edge browser, and stop Microsoft sharing your personal info. Don't use Windows 10 without this book by your side!

**BUY IT NOW FROM
AMAZON**

at www.snipca.com/17716

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FREE SOFTWARE

In our new 148-page book, we recommend only the very best free programs that deliver high-quality features and no nasty surprises (no junk – guaranteed!). It's packed with step-by-step tutorials and how-to guides for safe downloads – plus you'll learn which free antivirus you should use.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at www.snipca.com/16785

RASPBERRY PI FOR KIDS

The Raspberry Pi is the incredible £20 British computer that's taking the world by storm. It's ideal for children of all ages to experiment, play games and learn valuable skills. We've updated this 148-page book for 2015 to include instructions on mastering the new Pi models (A+ and B+).



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at www.snipca.com/16851

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

Inside this 148-page book you'll find all the free apps, expert tips and easy-to-follow Workshops you need to get the most out of your phone or tablet. You'll find buying advice, including reviews of the latest tablets and phones, and everything you need to know about taking your first steps with your new device.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at www.snipca.com/12476



REMOVE THE PROGRAMS HACKERS LOVE

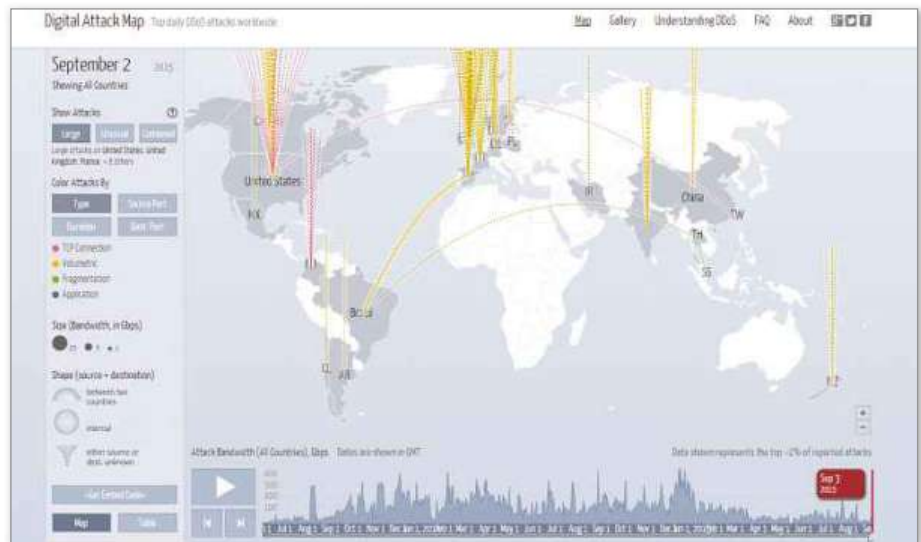
Bin your BitTorrent tools

"Security is our highest priority" said BitTorrent Sync, following a report by researchers (hackers, actually) who revealed the tool's numerous security vulnerabilities (www.snipca.com/17844). Sorry, BitTorrent Sync – your priority is not security, it's file-sharing.

BitTorrent Sync is just one of many 'client' programs that let people share data as "torrents", anonymously and for free, using the BitTorrent platform (www.bittorrent.com). Other popular clients include uTorrent and Vuze. None is illegal, and they can be very helpful for sharing enormous files with friends and family, and syncing data between devices.

Less ethically (and more commonly), torrents are used to share copyrighted material for free. If someone gets hold of a preview version of the latest Hollywood blockbuster and distributes it as a torrent, thousands of grateful users will download it for free. If you're a hacker, you might want to stick a malicious file in there too and sit back as people happily download it.

It gets worse. In August, researchers from City University London explained how a single hacker could launch DDoS



Hackers can use BitTorrent in global attacks, like those tracked on the Digital Attack Map

('distributed denial of service') attacks by spreading malware via BitTorrent users' computers, with the aim of shutting down entire servers; banks and news websites are common targets. You can read the report as a PDF at www.snipca.com/17846. For a simpler but no less dramatic insight, see DDoS attacks as they happen on the Digital Attack Map (www.digitalattackmap.com).

To avoid becoming a DDoS pawn – and taking a big hit on your bandwidth, and your PC's health and privacy – get rid of your BitTorrent tools now. Never download any freebie uploaded by an anonymous source without at least running it through malware-checking site VirusTotal (www.virustotal.com).

Can CamStudio and its PUPs

Windows 10 includes a screen-recording tool, but at the moment it's pretty basic. For good screen-recording software, you have to pay through the nose, ears and dropped jaw: Camtasia Studio costs £237 (www.snipca.com/17879).



CamStudio is free and useful – but its installer is often packed with adware

The best free third-party alternative is CamStudio. It's **open-source**, easy to use and has decent features, but don't touch it with a bargepole. Whether it's actually malicious is debatable – some sites think so (RemoveVirusPC.com, www.snipca.com/17858); some think it's ►

SO... IS HOLA SAFE NOW?

In January (Issue 441) we hailed **VPN** tool Hola as a way to beat geographical internet restrictions by disguising your **IP address** so you can, for example, watch US content on Netflix or BBC iPlayer overseas.

Then in July (Issue 453) we revealed that Hola had been exploited as a **botnet** by hackers and was no longer safe. We mourned Hola's loss – it's one of the most useful free tools we've ever used. Forty-six million other users agreed. Hackers really do love to wreck the best

things on the internet.

We're encouraged by Hola's updated FAQ (www.snipca.com/17854), which insists it "securely routes" data from the sites you access and never uses your IP address as a proxy unless your computer is "fully idle". This helps prevent your PC being co-opted in a hacking network.

But not all security experts are convinced, and Hola – which grew much faster than its creators expected – admits it must make changes. In an open letter, founder Ofer Vilenski writes: "There have been some terrible accusations against Hola which we feel are unjustified... We made some mistakes, and now we're going to fix them, fast" (www.snipca.com/17856).

Should you ditch Hola? Yes, for now. Once the company hires a Chief Security Officer – currently a work in progress – and releases a big security update, we'll take another look. Because let's be honest, we'll really miss iPlayer when we fly south for the winter.





just suspiciously “stubborn” (How To Remove, www.snipca.com/17859) and others don’t mind it at all (Should I Remove It? www.snipca.com/17860).

What’s certain is that its installer is a menace. You might be lucky enough to find it briefly free of PUPs, but we’ve never been able to install it on test computers without coincidentally acquiring a load of adware, notably Binkiland (more about which in a moment).

If CamStudio is on your computer, delete it and its leftover junk using IObit Uninstaller, then run AdwCleaner to weed out any remaining adware and malicious files in your Registry, browsers and hard drive.

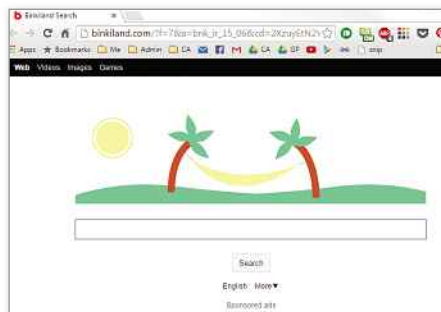
Eject browser hijackers

As we saw with CamStudio, the reputation-checking site Should I Remove It? can be somewhat generous in its ratings. It even gives Binkiland a ‘green’ (safe) status (www.snipca.com/17857). The green can only represent the sick feeling we get every time we see it – which is every time we open the browser on our test PC. We delete it, and it comes back. It’s like that permanent damp patch on your bathroom wall.

Binkiland is a browser hijacker, because it embeds itself in your browser (all of your browsers, in fact) and refuses to budge. It’s also likely to be spyware (www.snipca.com/17861). A similar offender that’s currently doing the rounds is Wajam, which – like Binkiland – claims to be nothing other than a safe search assistant. We’ve already got a search tool, thanks – it’s called Google. We don’t want any others.

Getting rid of these parasites is not easy. First clear them from your browser settings (they’ll be listed under search engines and perhaps also **extensions**); search for them in IObit Uninstaller and run the force-removal tool; clear leftovers using AdwCleaner; run CCleaner and Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free, and then do a full antivirus scan.

However, because tools like Binkiland



“Search engine” Binkiland is a browser hijacker that could be spying on you

use files that regenerate when deleted, they may still come back. So you should also try the manual file-removal steps outlined for different versions of Windows on the Spyware Techie site (www.snipca.com/17862). It recommends checking if hijackers DealKeeper, Optimizer Pro and RegClean Pro are on your hard drive too, and offers removal guides for each one.

Boot out MyPC Backup

You know you’re in trouble when you type the name of a program – in this case ‘My PC Backup’ – into Google and get a ‘card’ at the top telling you how to remove it. The card links to a page on the MalwareTips blog (www.snipca.com/17863), which claims this adware comes bundled in Cnet installers, installs itself without your permission and then demands cash to back up vital PC files. Shockingly, the program has even been found pre-installed on new laptops.

Symantec’s Norton Security tool (www.snipca.com/17866) can’t remove it, but



MyPC Backup pretends to be useful but just wants your money

we did find a detailed manual removal guide on the Lavasoft site (www.snipca.com/17867). See our Cover Feature in Issue 449 for more horror stories of pre-installed junk, and tips on removing it.

Erase video tools that are too good to be true

Free video software – with the noble exceptions of VLC and MediaPortal – is not to be trusted. Sorry for the generalisation, but it’s based on bitter experience of adware-riddled installers. Even VLC (www.snipca.com/17880) unnerved us when it launched, because it seemed too good to be true (it’s not – it’s brilliant, free and safe).

Our occasional ‘Named & Shamed’ columns are like a police line-up of video nasties, including Freemake Video Converter (Issue 443) and Free YouTube Downloader (Issue 454) – both of which install Wajam. Some sites regard Free YouTube Downloader itself as malware, and there’s a detailed removal guide on the Malware Killers site (www.snipca.com/17864).



If you’ve just managed to get Wajam off your PC, Freemake could put it straight back

Also beware of DVDVideoSoft (www.dvdvideosoft.com), maker of various free YouTube downloaders, screen recorders and BitTorrent clients. Its installers contain toolbars and browser hijackers that may be on your PC without your knowledge. Look carefully through your IObit Uninstaller list and blitz them using the multi-weapon approach described in the box on page 53. **ca**

NEXT ISSUE On sale Wednesday 30 September

WINDOWS 10
The best NEW things you can now do (which you couldn’t in 7 and 8)



Plus

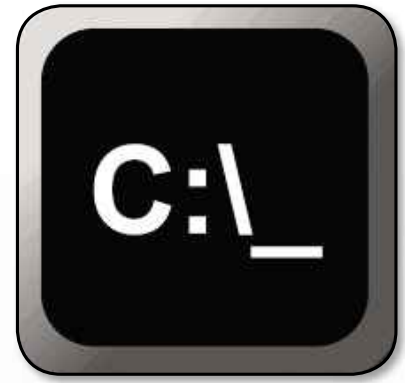
- **Are hackers reading your texts?**
Find out if you’ve been hit by recent attacks
- **Windows 10: problems fixed**
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ON SALE
30 Sept

PART 5

50 most useful Command Prompt commands



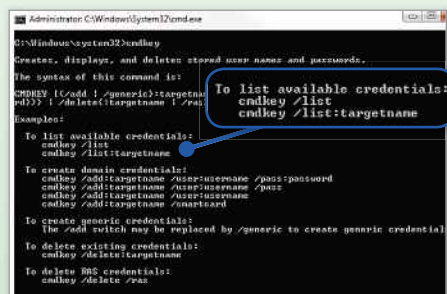
In the final part of our series, Jane Hoskyn reveals 10 commands for keeping your PC safe from hackers

41 Access your user info

The 'cmdkey' command, when used with certain **parameters**, lets you check usernames, passwords and other credentials stored on your PC (Windows Vista and later).

First (and this applies to most commands), you'll have to run the Command Prompt in administrator mode. Type **cmd** into Start, right-click Command Prompt (or 'cmd.exe') in the list of results and click 'Run as administrator'. The window will open as usual, with the prompt at C:\WINDOWS\system32, which gives you much deeper access to your system than the 'User' location in non-administrator mode.

Type **cmdkey** at the prompt and press Enter, and you'll see an explanation of its job and a few examples of parameters. You can find a more comprehensive list of cmdkey parameters on Microsoft's TechNet site (www.snipca.com/17754).



The 'cmdkey' command reveals its own list of parameters

42 Find your programs' licence keys

If you need to find the licence key for an installed program – for example, a program you've already bought and want to install in Windows 10 without having to cough up for it again – use **cmdkey** with the '/list' parameter.

Type **cmdkey /list** (including the space), then press Enter. The window will immediately reveal key information about some of your installed licenced software, such as Microsoft Outlook and

Adobe Photoshop, including full licence keys and the email address you registered the software under.

43 Create a credential

Cmdkey lets you create new program-specific credentials based on usernames and passwords. You'll need to include the name of the program in question, along with the parameters '/add:targetname' (where 'targetname' is the program you're trying to create credentials for). This may require a spot of trial and error before the Command Prompt recognises the program, but it'll work eventually, promise (unless you're using XP or earlier) – and typing **cmdkey /list** will give you some useful examples.

44 Create a username

Add the parameter '/user:username' (where 'username' is whatever you want your username to be) after 'cmdkey /add:targetname' to create a new username for your newly created credential. So you'd type **cmdkey /add:targetname /user:username** then press Enter.

45 Create a password

Same as above, but with the parameter '/pass:password' at the end, where 'password' is your chosen password (which should definitely *not* be 'password!'). So you'd type **cmdkey /add:targetname /user:username /pass:password** and then press Enter.

46 Restore security settings

Windows security settings can easily be messed up by accident or by a malware infection. Your saviour is the 'secedit' (security edit) command, which instantly restores your chosen security settings.

Typing **secedit** alone simply reveals available parameters. The first, '/configure', lets you restore settings to a certain configuration – but that assumes you know the configuration. As ever,

Microsoft's TechNet site can help you here (www.snipca.com/17759).

47 Restore default security settings

The simplest way to use 'secedit' is to add a string of characters that restore your PC's default security settings, rather than your own customised configuration. Carefully type **secedit /configure /cfg %windir%\inf\defltbase.inf /db defltbase.sdb /verbose** and then press Enter.

48 Check your router

The 'mrinfo' command may sound like one of Roger Hargreaves' more knowledgeable *Mr Men* characters, but it's all about router security. Type **mrinfo** to see a list of parameters for checking your router's usage, status and IP information.

49 Check your Wi-Fi

The 'net' command lets you configure your Wi-Fi settings and check who's using it – including uninvited Wi-Fi-hitchers. There are dozens of parameters for this command, including '/account', which lets you control your password.

50 Fight the evil Empire

We've saved the best for last: watch *Star Wars* in **ASCII** using the obscure built-in network tool Telnet, which integrates with the Command Prompt. There are several steps involved and we're out of space, so follow instructions for your Windows version on the excellent social site Quora (www.snipca.com/17760). **ca**



Watch *Star Wars* in the Command Prompt window

Windows 10 PROBLEMS FIXED

PART TWO

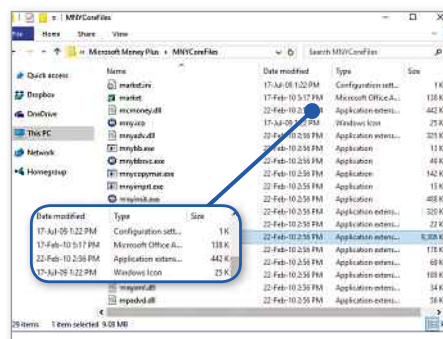
In the second in our special series, our Problems Solved team tackle more of your Windows 10 headaches

Can I get Microsoft Money to work in Windows 10?

Q Microsoft Money won't work in Windows 10, and nor will Money Plus and Money Sunset. Their absence is disastrous for me. I read that I may have to tweak the Registry to fix this, but I'm not confident enough to do that. Is there an easier solution?

Martyn Long

A There is now an easier fix for this than when Windows 10 launched. An update to the operating system has fixed a problem that prevented Money Plus Sunset Deluxe (the most recent version) from launching. This is what some people have been fixing using the Registry hack you heard about. So, as long as your version of Windows 10 is up to date, you can download the final version of the retired financial suite from



Changing the name of your Microsoft Money file may get the program working again if a Windows update hasn't

www.snipca.com/17774. We tried it on Windows 10 and it worked perfectly. However, some people are experiencing crashes when trying to import bank-statement files saved in Quicken Interchange Format (QIF) or Open Financial Exchange (OFX) format. We didn't encounter this problem when we tried but lots of people have complained about it, so it's clearly happening. Microsoft may release another Windows

10 update that will fix this glitch.

In the meantime, if you encounter this problem, you'll need to replace a file called `mnyob99.dll` with a patched version created by blogger Ameridan, who lets you download it for free (www.snipca.com/17775).

Press Win+E to launch File Explorer, then navigate to `C:\Program Files\Microsoft Money Plus\MNYCoreFiles` (assuming you installed Money on your C: drive). Select the existing file `mnyob99.dll`, then press F2 to rename it and type `mnyob99.old`. Now copy the patched version of the file into this folder and restart your PC.

In the longer term, it makes sense to consider moving on from Money. A good alternative is the free program GnuCash (www.gnucash.org), our favourite free personal finance tool (see Issue 445, page 61). It offers similar features to Money, and is actively developed and supported by a community of volunteers. It even imports QIF and OFX files, so it's great if you're coming from Money or Quicken.

Have I hit my Windows 10 download limit?

Q Windows 10 installed fine on my laptop, but not on my two desktop PCs. On the first desktop I got the error message 'Something happened' and the code '800700003'. On the second, I got the message 'multiprocessor configuration not supported'. This surprised me because the compatibility check had said it would be fine! I've had to reinstall Windows 8.1. What's happened? Could it be that I've exceeded my Windows 10 download limit?

Roy German

A There are no restrictions on how often you can download Windows 10. Each device must be eligible for the free upgrade, and most Windows 7/8/8.1 PCs are – but XP PCs are not.

There is a download limit for apps from the Windows Store, which is 10 devices per app, but this isn't why Windows 10 won't install on your PCs.

On the PC with the 'Something happened' error, log in as an administrator, then run Microsoft's free Windows Update Troubleshooter ([\[www.snipca.com/17771\]\(http://www.snipca.com/17771\)\). Restart, then try installing Windows 10 with Microsoft's media-creation tool \(\[www.snipca.com/17770\]\(http://www.snipca.com/17770\), see our Workshop on page 56 of Issue 456\).](http://www.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

The 'multiprocessor configuration' error is unrelated. Access that PC's BIOS by tapping Delete (Del) or F2 after switching on your PC, then use the arrow keys and Enter to look for a setting labelled 'CPUID Value Limit' or similar. Switch it to Disabled, then restart and try upgrading again.

Why is my processor running so slowly?

Q Since installing Windows 10, my Acer Aspire 5733's **processor** is running at around 40 per cent all the time. According to Task Manager it seems to be related to something called 'IAStorDataSvc'. If I stop the process, everything calms down. Can I uninstall this process before my computer melts? I'm sure this has only appeared since Windows 10 has been installed.

David S Crawford



You may need to upgrade your processor's drivers manually after upgrading to Windows 10

A This process belongs to Intel's Rapid Storage Technology (RST), which is basically a set of **drivers** to make storage devices like hard drives and **SSDs** work as fast as they can. You should avoid using Task Manager to stop it, because this could lead to data loss.

It's quite common for this and other processes to cause occasional spikes in

processor use, but it's not normal for it to be permanently consuming so much of your processor's power. We can't be certain, but it's possible that your upgrade to Windows 10 failed to update to the latest version of RST. You can get it from www.snipca.com/17782, but remember to back up your data before installing.

Can I stop Windows 10 asking me for a password?

Q I upgraded to Windows 10 from Windows 7 Professional and, aside from having to update the audio driver and reinstall Kaspersky, all went well. I'm the only user of my laptop and never take it out of the house, so it annoys me that Windows 10 insists that I enter a password every time I boot up. Is there a simple fix?

Derek Heaton

A Yes, and it's an old fix that works just as well with almost all Windows versions – including XP.



You can set Windows to request a password – or not – in Windows 10 and older versions

Press Start or hit the Windows key, type **netplwiz** and then click netplwiz.exe. Select the Users tab, then click to highlight the user account you'd like to log into automatically (must be an administrator account). Now untick 'Users must enter a user name and password to use this computer', then click Apply. A new box will pop up asking you to confirm your password. Check the username is correct, then click OK to confirm. Click OK again, and you'll no longer be bothered by requests for your password.

To reverse this in future, just repeat these instructions – but tick 'Users must enter a user name and password to use this computer' instead of unticking. **ca**

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
30 Sept

- How can I synchronise emails with my calendar?
- Why won't Windows 10 update?
- How can I make the Start menu look less messy?
- ...And many more

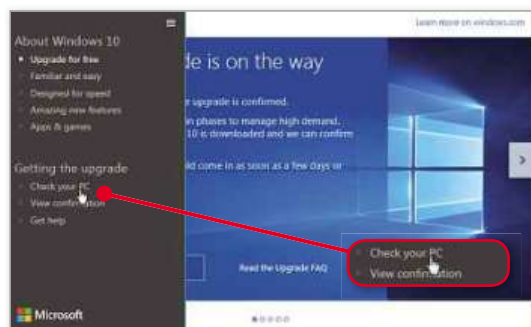
Will I have to reinstall all my software?

Q I haven't upgraded to Windows 10 yet, partly because I like Windows 8.1, and partly because when I upgraded from 8 to 8.1 I 'lost' my licence key for Norton Internet Security. If I upgrade, will I have to reinstall all my software, including programs I've paid for, such as Office 2010?

Paul Sparks

A No, in short. If you bought a retail version of Windows 10 and then performed a 'clean' install, that would indeed wipe your PC, but your free upgrade from Windows 8.1 to 10 would be an 'in-place' upgrade. That means almost everything on your PC will remain exactly as it is.

However, there might be a few exceptions. If Microsoft identifies any of your installed programs as being incompatible with Windows 10, then you'll be warned before proceeding. If you proceed, these flagged-up programs will be removed. If there are later versions of those programs that are compatible with Windows 10,



Use the Get Windows 10 tool to check whether your installed software will survive the upgrade

you'll have to reinstall them manually.

You can check all this before you start. Launch the Get Windows 10 tool by clicking its icon on your taskbar, then click the menu icon (three lines) and choose 'Check your PC'. Click 'Your apps & data' to see what programs, if any, won't make it to Windows 10. For more information, click 'details' alongside each entry.

We'll keep the 'Windows 10: Problems Solved' series running for as long as you keep our inbox overflowing with questions (email them to noproblem@computeractive.co.uk). Look out for Part 3 in Issue 459, on sale Wednesday 30 September.

Improve your

Autograph

AUTOCORRECT



Autocorrect is fantastic, until it gets something wrong. Jane Hoskyn shows you how to teach autocorrect to write perfectly on your phone, tablet and PC

Let's not be too hard on autocorrect. OK, Stuart Andrews (The Final Straw, Issue 420) was dead right to say it's infuriating, and you'd be forgiven for viewing it as an arrogant, presumptuous imposition on your phone, tablet and even your PC. But it has come a long way – after all, Word's spell-checker has been around since people first typed "Arrgh!" and the spell-checker automatically changed it to "Earth!".

The web is full of entertaining and humiliating examples of wrongly "corrected" words in important texts or emails. One woman recently received 12 bags of flour after texting her boyfriend to ask for flowers (www.snipca.com/17896), though we're not sure if that's really an autocorrect mistake or just a boyfriend with a bad sense of humour. You can find thousands more auto-disasters on the infamous website 'Damn You, Autocorrect!' (www.damnyouautocorrect.com) – but be warned, some of them are rather crude.

The point is autocorrect is only infuriating when it gets something wrong. Most of the time, it's an incredibly useful tool, especially for those of us whose fingers struggle to accommodate the tiny letters on phone keypads. Here we'll show you how to turn autocorrect into a blessing so good you'll never even notice it doing its work.

Teach autocorrect to be less stupid

Most tablets and smartphones learn your autocorrect preferences simply by paying attention as you type.

Apple iPhones were the first devices to do this really well. If your iPad or iPhone



Don't ignore your autocorrect's suggestions – they are your chance to teach it

is about to correct a word as you're typing it, you'll see the imminent "correction" in a pop-up. To stop the correction, tap the 'x' in the pop-up. To accept it, tap Space and carry on typing.

Do this with misguided suggestions a couple of times, and autocorrect will never bother you with them again, such as suggesting 'color' for 'colour' or (a personal favourite) suggesting 'AMD' – the name of a tech company – for 'amd',

which is an obvious mis-typing of 'and'.

You need to do your bit, though. Keep an eye on the screen as you type, and make sure to accept correct changes and reject incorrect ones. If you ignore them or decide to switch the feature off (which is easy to do in your device settings) and correct all your mistakes manually as you type, autocorrect can't and won't learn. It's like doing a child's homework for them – no-one benefits in the long run.

Android has long had similar 'smart' autocorrect functions too, and you'll also find them built into

messaging apps such as WhatsApp (Android, iOS and Windows Phone, www.whatsapp.com) and Pushbullet (Android and iOS, www.pushbullet.com/apps).

Expand your Android's vocabulary

Android's 'Personal dictionary' tool lets you add words – such as nicknames, slang words or even your postcode – that you want autocorrect to wave through the gate without question.

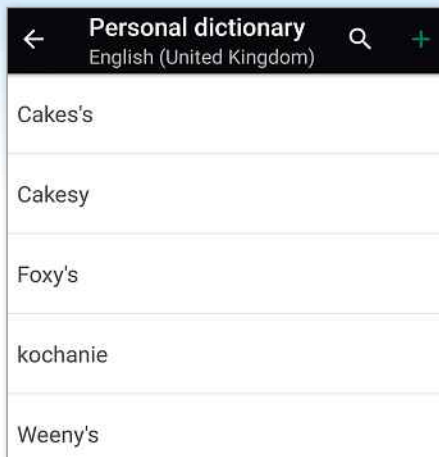
YOUR BRAIN: THE ORIGINAL AUTOCORRECT

As satisfying and fun as it may be to point and laugh at autocorrect mistakes, your brain has been doing the same thing since the day you were born. Spell-checkers may be new, because digital keyboards are new, but the concept

of autocorrect is hard-wired into all of



us, to help us read, navigate and stay safe. That's why you see faces where there are none, read invisible words because you expect them in context, or see one word where there are two. To cite a famous example, what does the sentence in the triangle to the left say?



Android's 'Personal dictionary' lets you add unusual words that it won't try to correct

Tap the Settings icon, scroll down to Personal and then tap 'Language & input'. We're using an Android 5 (Lollipop) device, but the process is similar in earlier versions of the operating system. The dictionary applies to all apps that use the default Google Keyboard, which hasn't changed since Android 4.

Tap 'Google Keyboard English (UK)' under 'Keyboard & input methods', then tap 'Text correction'. Here you'll find loads of useful options (such as 'Next-word suggestions') that you can toggle on and off.

Tap 'Personal dictionary' at the top and then 'English (United Kingdom)' to see a list of all the words you've added to your dictionary, if any (Cakes, Weeny and Foxy are cats, in case you were wondering about the screenshot above!). To add a new word, simply tap the '+' symbol and type the word. It is saved automatically.

Turn autocorrect into useful shortcuts

Android's dictionary also lets you set a shortcut to automatically type any given word or phrase (including those you've added). Just type a letter or few in the Shortcut field under the word you've entered. Now, when you're typing in any app that uses Android's default Google



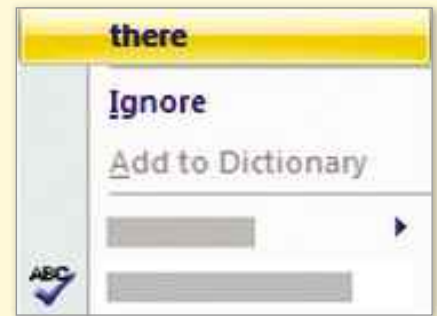
Your Keyboard Settings turn Android's autocorrect into a handy shortcut tool

IMPROVE WORD'S SPELL CHECK

Microsoft Word's 'Spelling and Grammar' tools take a slightly different approach to the notion of annoying the hell out of you when you're typing. Rather than automatically changing any unfamiliar word, it fills your screen with red and green dotted lines to indicate supposedly incorrect spelling and grammar.

As with mobile autocorrect, Microsoft's dotted lines are annoyingly blunt instruments. The grammar check, especially, fails to take into account the subtleties of the English language and the way we express ourselves informally, and we think it's best switched off altogether.

The spell check can be useful, and you can set it to autocorrect certain



mis-spellings and typing mistakes (such as accidental Caps Lock), according to your preferences. There's plenty of useful information on Microsoft's website; here's a good place to start: www.snipca.com/17897.

Keyboard, autocorrect will fill in the full word or phrase automatically when you type the shortcut.

It works much the same in iOS. Tap Settings, then Keyboard on the default General screen, and then tap Shortcuts. You'll find a couple of examples waiting for you, such as 'omw', which is autocorrected to read 'On my way!' (see screenshot below left) – obviously, you can go much further than that. The process for doing so is similar to Android: tap the '+', type a word or phrase to add it to the dictionary, and then type an optional shortcut.

Go easy on the shortcuts, though. If your postcode starts IG20, for example, and you choose 'ig' as the shortcut to type your address in full, your address will suddenly appear every time you start typing any word beginning 'ig' – and there are lots of those.

Switch to a more auto-eloquent keyboard

The default keyboards in iOS and Android (Google Keyboard) can be taught to behave better, but there are third-party alternatives that are better at avoiding autocorrect trauma in the first place.

Our favourite is SwiftKey Keyboard (Android www.snipca.com/17898, iOS www.snipca.com/17899), which contains "autocorrect that actually works" and learns your slang and phrases more quickly than built-in tools. We like that you can import your "autocorrect quirks" from online accounts such as Facebook; we're not so keen on the emphasis on emoji ('smiley faces' to you and me).

Swype (www.swype.com) has more




Switch to a free app like SwiftKey Keyboard for better autocorrect-customising options

features, but it's not free (79p for iOS, 59p for Android). However, there's a free 'trial' version for Android (www.snipca.com/17900).

Hack your iOS Contacts

To make autocorrect ignore a specific word or phrase in iOS, you can either add it to the Shortcuts menu or – usefully in the case of someone's nickname – add it to your Contacts. Any name, real or otherwise (or indeed any word, including those that autocorrect seems offended by) will then be accepted as correct.

We're far too nice to show you how to teach your iPad to swear, so we'll leave it to these less sensitive souls: www.snipca.com/17893. 

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Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

Why is my display dark at the top and bottom?

Q I have an Iiyama ProLite E2483HS monitor that I'm generally happy with, except for one problem: the brightness changes depending on my viewing height. For my work, I regularly require photos printed by professional firms, and some prints come back incorrect because my monitor is giving me a false sense of brightness.

The top of my screen is at eye level but when I lower my viewing height, the brightness alters – not massively, but sufficiently to mean my image 'exposure' is wrong so my processed prints come back too dark! I've adjusted many images in order to get a correct print result, but this isn't ideal.

I'm sure I'm not imagining this as I've used three different print companies, and I've experimented with loads of different settings. Why does this happen? Are there options I can change? Should I buy a new monitor with consistent output?

Dimo Darden

A We could fill a whole magazine by discussing the finer points of creating perfectly balanced brightness and contrast, and accurate colour reproduction – but we need to be concise here.

First, you're not imagining this: your display will appear less bright (and with reduced contrast) at the top and bottom. This phenomenon is normal and defined by the viewing angle and **contrast ratio**. Wider viewing angles and higher contrast ratios are both beneficial, but sadly there's no agreed standard for defining what these terms really mean.

For your specific display model Iiyama claims 'viewing zones' (meaning viewing angles) of up to 178



degrees for both the horizontal and vertical. That's not a dishonest claim: if you crane your neck to view the screen from an angle of 89 degrees in any one direction, you'll still be able to see something on screen. Well, just about: 89 degrees is basically side-on, so simple geometry dictates that anything you see will be massively distorted and hard to make out.

But look a bit closer at Iiyama's specifications and you'll see that the 178-degree claim is qualified by 'CR>5': this means that at extreme angles the contrast ratio will be just 5:1 (from the display's 1000:1 'typical' rating). A low contrast ratio means it's more difficult to distinguish one object from another, even if those objects have very high contrast (such as white-on-black text).

In fact, for your display Iiyama also states a second viewing-angle specification of 170 degrees horizontally and 160 degrees vertically, meaning only within that notional cone will you see contrast ratios above 5:1 (and closer to the monitor's 1000:1 'typical' claim).

Key to your solution is to find a monitor that offers better brightness and contrast at extreme viewing angles. Manufacturers make extravagant claims about all these points, so you really need to try before you buy. And keep an eye on our Reviews section for recommendations.

Has BT installed spyware on my laptop?

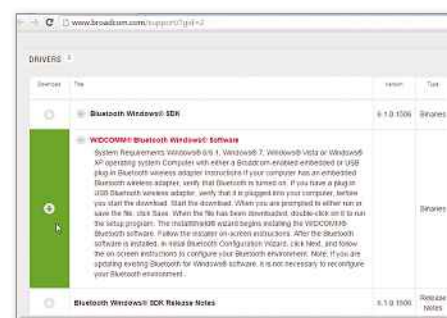
Q I'd been using Office 365 on my Windows 7 laptop for a few months without any problems. Recently, Excel stopped working. When I try to launch, it displays an error message about something called 'btoofficeaddin'. It gives me the option to disable it, but I really don't want to do the wrong thing. My internet service provider is BT so I'm wondering if the company has forced something on to my PC, perhaps some spyware so it can watch what I do in Office? What should I do?

Daniel Foster

A This has nothing to do with BT. Your problem is caused by an incompatibility between the latest version of Excel and a Bluetooth (or 'BT') add-on on your laptop, known as Send To Bluetooth. By default, Office 365 updates itself automatically, which is why this problem has suddenly arisen.

The solution is to visit your laptop manufacturer's website and download the latest Bluetooth **drivers**. If there's none available, try the latest generic ones from Broadcom, the company that will almost certainly have made the Bluetooth component in your laptop – they're free from www.snipca.com/17535. Alternatively, wait for the next Office 365 update, which should fix the problem.

If you don't use the Send To Bluetooth option (it's in the File menu in any Office program, under Add-Ins) then you can safely disable it. To do this, click Yes on that Excel error box.



Download the latest Bluetooth drivers from Broadcom's website

Our experts solve all your tech problems

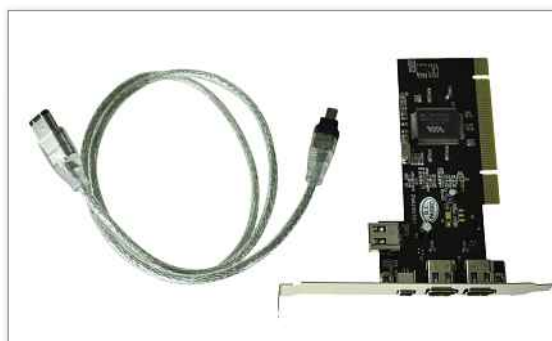
✉ Email us your problem and we'll try to help: noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

How do I connect my old camcorder to my PC?

Q I have a load of analogue tapes containing videos captured with my old Samsung VP-381i camcorder. Do you know of some device that will let me convert my tapes to digital files via my laptop or desktop PC? I have an AverMedia's DVD EZMaker USB Plus which comes with a cable, but none of the connections fit. It seems there's no way to connect my old technology to my modern computers. Here's hoping your brains are better than this 80-year-old pensioner's!

Arnie Dudley

A We know that your tapes look and feel like analogue relics, but we have some good news: they're actually digital video (DV) tapes, so the footage they contain is already digital. The bad news is that transferring this digital video to your modern PCs is almost certainly going to require the purchase of some new hardware.

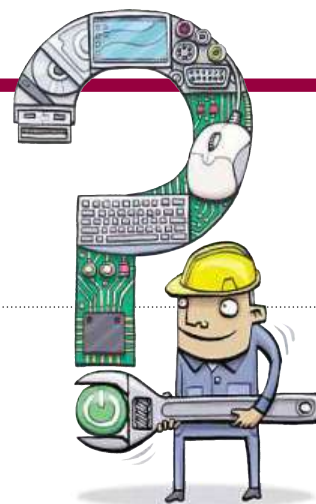


Use a FireWire expansion card to connect your old camcorder to a modern PC and transfer digital video

Your camcorder will have a small, four-pin FireWire port (probably labelled as 'DV port' or 'IEEE1394', but they're all the same thing), which you can use to connect your device to a computer. The problem is that very few modern PCs have built-in FireWire ports.

For your specific circumstances the easiest (and cheapest) option is to buy a FireWire expansion card for your desktop PC. This £5.29 example from Amazon (www.snipca.com/17510) even comes with the cable you'll need (see image above).

Once you've installed this card into a spare expansion slot, you can then link



the cable between it and your camcorder. You can spend money on fancy video-capture and editing software if you like, but if you simply want to transfer the content of your DV tapes to your hard drive then a free tool like WinDV

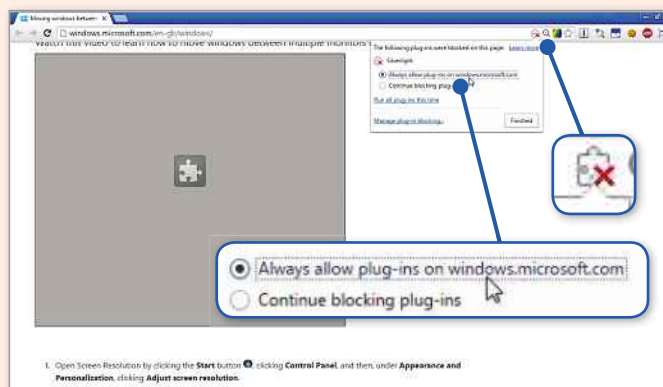
(<http://windv.mourek.cz>) will do the job quickly and easily. WinDV doesn't even need installing: just double-click the WinDV.exe file to launch it.

Now switch on your camcorder, select it in the 'Video source' dropdown menu on WinDV's 'Capturing from DV device' tab, type a name for the video file in the 'Capt. file' field, then click Capture. WinDV even controls your camcorder's playback, so there's nothing else for you to do but sit back and wait. You can edit the resulting files in Windows Movie Maker (a free download from Microsoft at www.snipca.com/17511, if you don't already have it).

How do I give Silverlight permission to run?

Q I was following some Windows advice on the Microsoft website, when I hit a problem. The page featured a video demonstrating a particular method. I'd like to watch this, but all I get is a grey box with the message "Silverlight needs your permission to run". The page is definitely a Microsoft one so I think it's trustworthy, but I can find no way to give permission! There's no Yes or OK button to click, and I can find no other way to give my permission. What is Silverlight? Is it safe? And, if so, how do I give my permission for it run?

Sue Pratt



To view video content in the Chrome browser enable the Silverlight plug-in

A Silverlight is Microsoft's equivalent of Adobe Flash, meaning it's a tool that makes it easier to create fancy content for web pages. It's legitimate but, like Flash, has suffered numerous security flaws over the years. For this reason it's rapidly falling out of favour, with Google saying it will eventually drop support for it from Chrome.

We mention Chrome because the

message you're receiving tells us you're using Google's browser. You can still make Silverlight content play in Chrome and yes, content on Microsoft's pages should be quite safe. So, visit the relevant website then look in Chrome's address bar for a little puzzle-piece icon with a red cross (see screenshot). Click this, select the 'Always allow plug-ins...' button then click Finish. Refresh the page to view the Silverlight content.

Problems Solved

Why does my PC sometimes fail to start?

Q I'm using a Windows XP PC. I am going to get a new Windows 10 machine, but I'd like to keep this one going if possible. However, sometimes it won't boot, showing just a blank screen with a flashing cursor. Switching it off and on a few times usually fixes it. It's all backed up so I'm not too worried, but any ideas? Is it worth spending money on?

Bernard Shaw

A This has the hallmarks of failing hardware – probably the hard drive. A flashing cursor when switching on is an indication that the PC can't find a hard drive and/or an installed operating system. The problem's intermittent nature suggests an impending failure.

Install a Self-Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Technology (SMART) tool to give the drive a health check, either one downloaded from the drive manufacturer's website or the free PassMark DiskCheckup (www.snipca.com/17591, see screenshot below). Click the Desk Self Test tab, then click Start Test.

Our guess is that you'll be told the drive is on its way out. Is it worth fixing? That's up to you. Replacement hard drives are pretty cheap (like this £40 1TB model from Western Digital, www.snipca.com/17558), so while the old one is still working you could install a second drive then use the free program HDClone 5 (www.snipca.com/17559) to create a carbon copy. Then swap the new for old and you're done.



Carry out a health check on a faulty hard drive using PassMark DiskCheckup

How do I catalogue my CDs?

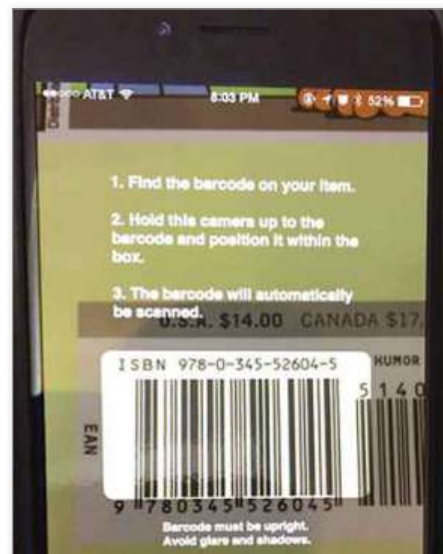
Q Over the years I've accumulated lots of CDs, but now that I download tracks I find that I already have some of them in my CD collection. I'd like to avoid duplicating, but it would take an age to sort through my collection to see if I already have a track. Is there a simple and free way to catalogue my CD collection to build up a searchable database?

Wayne Tatton

A Yes, there are plenty of ways to do this. Probably the easiest method is to use a smartphone or tablet's camera as a scanner. For instance, Sort It Apps (www.sortitapps.com) offers a free music-cataloguing app for both Android (www.snipca.com/17553) and Apple (www.snipca.com/17554) devices.

You'll need to sign up for a free account but once you've done this all you have to do is tap the +plus (+) button, then scan a CD's bar code. The paid-for version of the app also offers a Bulk Camera Scan option to speed up the process.

With the data now in your smartphone or tablet, it's easy to search – the option is



Catalogue tracks in your CD collection with phone apps that let you scan your discs

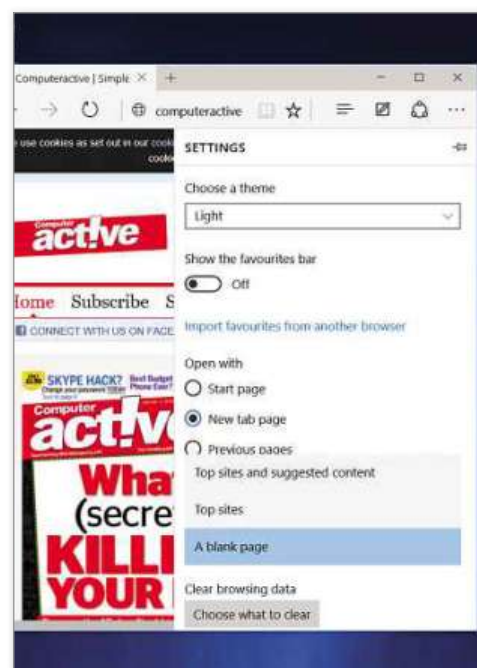
built into the app. If you'd prefer to browse your catalogue on your PC, you can also log in at www.sortitapps.com. There's also a complementary Windows tool called Collectors (www.snipca.com/17555), which offers advanced management tools – but this costs US\$24.99 (around £16).

How do I stop Microsoft Edge from showing 'Top sites'?

Q I've treated myself to a new Windows 10 laptop, which is working well. I'm also pretty happy with Microsoft's new Edge browser. However, I find the 'Top sites' feature really annoying. I worked out that if I right-click entries I can delete them, but new ones (and even old ones) reappear just a few days later. I don't want this feature. Can I switch it off, or choose what sites are displayed?

Lauren Ellis

A You can't yet choose which sites are displayed on this page, though we imagine (and hope) Microsoft will add such a feature. However, you can disable it. In Edge, click the menu button (three dots, at the top right) then Settings. Now scroll to the 'Open new tabs with' heading, click to open the menu beneath, then click 'A blank page'.



Stop Edge displaying 'Top sites' in search results via the Settings menu

How do I block my caller ID on a smartphone?

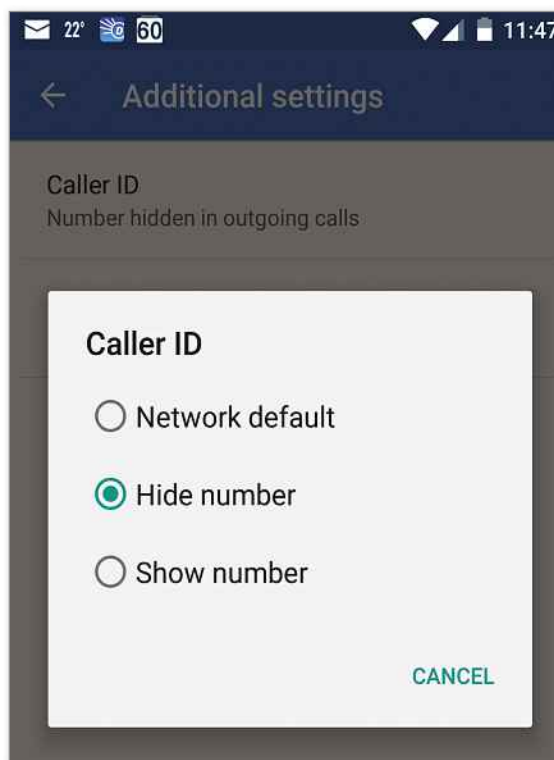
Q In an effort to reduce nuisance phone calls I always use the 141 prefix when calling companies from my landline, as this prevents the people on the receiving end of my call from seeing my number.

I recently joined the modern world and got myself a mobile phone, so I thought I'd adopt the same strategy. However, although it let me dial 141 before the number I needed to call, I was then met with this message: "Hide ID is not available via 141. Please use your handset menu option". Is there a way to stop my number being revealed?

Harriet King

A The 141 prefix is commonly used on landlines for blocking the outgoing 'caller ID' (ie, your number), but it's not supported by all mobile networks or calling plans.

An alternative that should work on many mobile networks is to dial #31#



You can hide your caller ID on both Android and iOS through your phone's settings

instead. Unlike a landline, where the number is typically dialed as you type it, this should be included as part of the full dialling string before you hit the Dial button. If you're dialling 0987654321, for example, you should type **#31#0987654321** before pressing Dial.

If this doesn't work on your network or you'd simply like to block your caller ID for all outgoing calls, this can usually be found as an option on your phone. You didn't tell us which phone you have, but it's pretty simple on both an iPhone and Android phones.

If you've got an iPhone, on the home screen tap Settings followed by Phone. Now tap Show My Caller ID and switch the slider to the Off position. On Android, first launch the Phone app. Now tap the menu icon (three horizontal dots at the top right) followed by Settings, Calls, then 'Additional settings'. Finally, tap Caller ID and select the 'Hide number' button.

Where are my missing Android options?

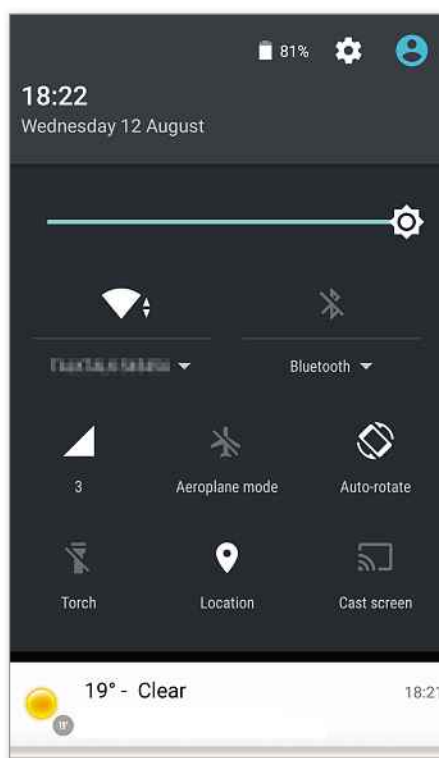
Q After a recent software update to my Motorola 4G phone I now find that the Power Off menu is missing a few options. In fact, there's now only one: Power Off. What has happened to the other options? How do I get them back?

Jenny Crawley

A What's happened is that your phone had been updated to Android 5.0 (aka Lollipop), which has moved a number of options, including removing both Restart and 'Airplane mode' options from the Power Off menu. It also deleted icons for the Mute and Vibrate modes.

You can still access Mute with a key press. Just press volume up or down once and then tap the bell icon to silence your phone. You'll also see options here to mute some or all notifications.

You can still get to 'Airplane mode' easily. Swipe down with two fingers from the top of your device's screen to open the Quick Settings pane, then just tap 'Airplane mode' to turn it on or off.



Access 'Airplane mode' and other common settings by swiping down with two fingers

The Restart option has gone, although it's really no different to tapping Power Off and then restarting – though obviously that does involve one extra step. You can still perform a 'soft reset' by holding down the power button for about 10 seconds, which will force your phone to reboot. This usually isn't harmful but doesn't offer the same 'graceful' shut down as Restart (or a manual power off then on), meaning you might lose a work-in-progress email, for example – so it's an option you should really only use when your phone has crashed or is behaving oddly.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
30 Sept

- Why can't I send emails?
- Why won't some videos play in Windows 8.1?
- How do I back up my Android autocorrect dictionary?
- ...And many more

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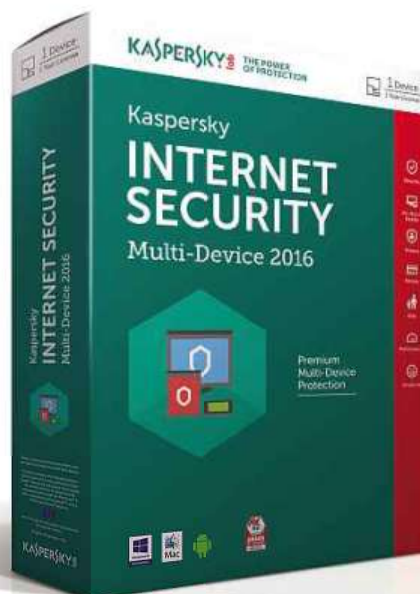
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Your Microsoft account

Solve any sign-in problem, recover lost messages and contacts, and restore blocked or closed accounts

You can't sign in

Many things can stop you logging into your Microsoft account. The most obvious is that you're using the wrong username or password, though you might be convinced that you're not. Check that Caps Lock isn't enabled, but don't forget Num Lock too, as this can also cause incorrect input – particularly on laptops, as yours might have an 'embedded' numeric pad. Microsoft obscures typed passwords with dots, so open Notepad to check your keyboard is correctly typing what you're inputting. You can even copy

Captcha). Follow the wizard-style Q&A. If you don't have answers to some of the questions, then you'll eventually reach a long information-request form: it's safe to supply as much personal information as possible as it'll eventually be reviewed by a Microsoft employee. It'll take a while, but if your request is considered legitimate, you'll be contacted with further instructions.

Your account is blocked

If Microsoft detects that your account might be involved in what it considers suspicious activity, then it will automatically block access for 24 hours. Spam sent from your account (which could happen if you're hacked or even spoofed, for example) would trigger such a block. Return in 24 hours, supply the requested security information to confirm your identity, then see 'Your account's been hacked' (below) to change all your security details. If the block isn't lifted automatically, fill in the support form at www.snipca.com/17616 to have your account and problem reviewed by a human moderator.

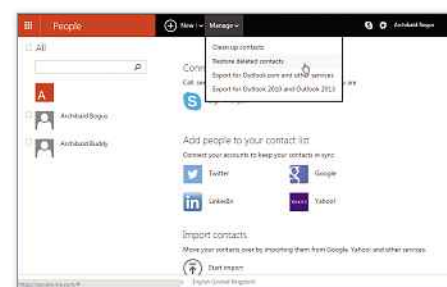
Spam sent from your account

The most likely cause of someone sending emails purporting to be from your Microsoft email address is 'spoofing', where digital miscreants use names and email addresses to circumvent spam filters. Their lists are typically purchased in bulk, so it's nothing personal. There's nothing to do but wait for the perpetrators to move on to their next victim. If you receive 'failure' alerts, just delete them: the receiving servers are simply doing their job by reporting back to you as the 'sender'. But if you fear your account's really been hacked, read the next tip.

Your account's been hacked

Fixing a hacked account depends on the situation. If you can't even log in, first read the 'Forgotten password or can't log in' tip. If access is still allowed, then immediately change both your password and backup security information. Log in at https://account.microsoft.com, click 'Security & privacy' at the top followed by 'Change password'. Repeat, but this time click 'More security settings': check that all the information here is correct, clicking Remove, Edit or 'Add security info' as appropriate.

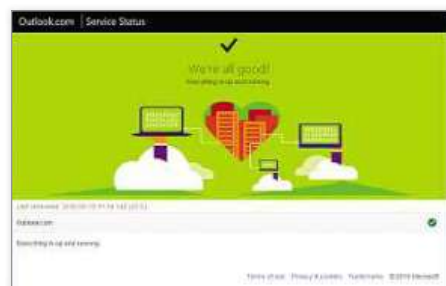
Also set up 'Two-step verification' to stop future hacks. Click 'Set up two-step verification' and follow the prompts. Finally, look in Outlook.com's Deleted folder to recover any lost emails; and to restore missing contacts, visit https://people.live.com then click Manage, followed by 'Restore deleted contacts'.



Use this option to restore lost contacts after your account's been hacked

Windows 8 or 10 account problems

If you can't access the Windows Store or are experiencing almost any other kind of problem with your Microsoft account in Windows 8.1 or 10, the little-known Microsoft Account Troubleshooter will detect and should be able to fix the problem. Download it from www.snipca.com/17617 then double-click to run. You'll might be prompted to restart your PC after the tool has carried out detective work or be offered more instructions for fixing any problems that it finds.



Check service-status pages like this one to see if the problem is at Microsoft's end

your confirmed details from Notepad using Control (Ctrl)+C and then paste it into the username or password field with Ctrl+V. Finally, check that the relevant Microsoft service is working. For instance, Outlook.com (née Hotmail) has a service-status page at www.snipca.com/17597 – so use this to discover if the problem is at Microsoft's end. If all else fails, read the next tip.

Forgotten password or can't log in

Can't remember your password, or all login attempts have failed? It's time to visit Microsoft's password-reset page at www.snipca.com/17598 (with its dreaded



If you've forgotten your password or all login attempts have failed, try this recovery page

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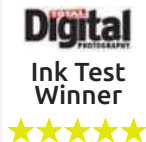
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3		EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£1.00 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£12.00
4		Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00

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Jargon Buster

1080p Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

3G A mobile communications standard allowing phones and other portable devices to connect to each other and the internet.

4G The successor to 3G that delivers faster mobile internet speeds.

4K A display or image resolution that is double that of 1080p both horizontally and vertically – ie 3840x2160 pixels.

5K A display resolution of 5120x2880 pixels, so named for the horizontal resolution being upwards of 5,000 pixels.

802.11ac A standard for wireless networks that allows for far higher transfer speeds than 802.11n.

802.11n A standard for wireless networks that allows for high transfer speeds.

Aperture An opening that controls the amount of light entering a camera lens.

ASCII A character-encoding style using plain text, developed in the 1970s and popularised by MS-DOS.

BIOS Basic Input-Output System. Essential software built into all PCs that connects the vital components.

Botnet A group of infected PCs connected via the internet, and used to infect other PCs, send junk email and perform criminal tasks.

Captcha A security measure requiring you to type text from an on-screen image to distinguish human and machine input.

Chassis (laptop) The physical frame of the laptop that its components are attached to.

Contrast ratio A measure of the difference between the darkest and lightest possible shades shown by a screen.

DisplayPort A new socket for connecting monitors that's still relatively rare.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with a peripheral device.

Dual-core processor When two processors are combined into a single chip.

Duty cycle (printer) The maximum number of pages you can safely print per month without risk of damaging the printer.

EPUB A file format used by many popular ebook readers.

EPUB3 The latest specification of EPUB, offering improved features.

Ethernet A standard used for almost all wired PC networks.

Extension The letters after the full stop in a computer file name. These denote what kind of file it is.

Feedback The tactile response that the keys on a keyboard give when they've been pressed.

GHz Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second.

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

HDMI A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

HTML Hypertext Markup Language. The language used to write most web pages.

HTML5 The latest version of HTML, which includes extra commands allowing for more complex designs.

IP address Internet Protocol Address. A unique set of numbers, separated by full stops, to identify PCs and websites on the internet.

IPX7 A rating for protection against outside intrusion. An IPX7 rating means a device can withstand incidental exposure to up to 1m of water for up to 30 minutes.

LCD Liquid-Crystal Display. The technology used to create almost all flat displays, from digital watches to televisions.

Megapixel A measure of the amount of detail that can be recorded by a digital image.

MicroHDMI A miniature version of HDMI often found on smartphones and tablets.

MicroSD A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

Open-source Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by the employees of the company that created it.

Overclocking Making a processor faster to improve performance, at the cost of higher temperatures and requiring more power.

Parameter A rule defining how a particular command will run when executed.

PCI Express A faster version of PCI, used by modern graphics cards.

Phishing Online fraud where scammers send emails that appear to be from reputable companies in an attempt to get users to divulge personal details.

Plug-in A small program that adds features to your web browser or to other applications, and is loaded only when it's needed.

Processor The processor – or central processing unit – is the brain of a computer.

Proprietary (operating systems) Ownership protected under a registered trade name.

PUP Potentially Unwanted Program. Software that's either unnecessary or potentially harmful to your PC.

Quad core A PC that has four processors on a single chip, allowing it to operate faster than single-core computers.

RAM Random-access memory. The PC's working area, used for data storage while the PC is on.

Resolution The amount of detail shown in an image, whether on screen or printed.

Retina Apple's marketing term for high-resolution screens, typically above 300ppi (pixels per inch).

Rootkit Malware that gives a hacker administration rights and access to a computer.

SATA 3 Also known as SATA 600. The latest and fastest version of the SATA interface for connecting internal storage devices to a PC.

SD card Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card for portable storage.

Spoofing A technique whereby hackers pose as legitimate websites, emails or IP addresses to gain access to sensitive data.

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts and is therefore more physically robust.

System restore point The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

Thermal printer A printer that uses heated pins to form characters on heat-sensitive paper.

Trojan A malicious computer program that's disguised as a different, harmless program.

USB 2.0 Faster successor to USB that's used by devices such as external hard drives.

USB 3.0 An even faster version of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

USB 3.1 Type-C A brand-new version of USB that combines the latest high-speed connection speeds with a reversible small-scale connector.

Virtual desktop A desktop environment you can expand beyond the physical confines of your PC's screen.

Zero-day vulnerability A previously unknown software flaw that can be exploited by malware or hackers before it's identified and fixed.

The Final Straw



STUART ANDREWS is
Computeractive's Mr Angry

In this issue Stuart Andrews is being tormented by...

Misbehaving mice

Is any device as annoying yet as necessary as the PC mouse? I've tried to use touchpads and flirted with touchscreens. I've even used a trackball in my time. Yet, when it comes to controlling Windows, I just can't kick the mouse habit.

Sure, I know that keyboard shortcuts can be faster, but when I launch programs, make selections or choose options from a dropdown menu, my brain just goes into autopilot and starts clicking. When I pull out a laptop to work on my kitchen table, I still plug in a mouse within minutes. I've even bought one for the Windows 10 tablet I use away from home, because I can't bear to do any serious work without one.

“

Seriously, putting a 'back' button on a mouse where my thumb rests? Did anyone really think that one through?

”

And yet mice have always meant trouble. My first rodent was an expensive add-on for the ZX Spectrum which never worked with the primitive art package it was supposed to. My second, for the Commodore Amiga, had a dodgy button and needed almost constant cleaning. This in itself was a nightmare, as the little ball you had to pull out would invariably hop out of my hands and roll under the sofa. Even the early two-button mice that

plugged into my first PC's serial port were problematic, refusing to work on a range of surfaces and constantly hoovering up dirt, hair and gunge from what seemed like a pretty clean desk.

I remember my excitement at the first Microsoft ergonomic mice. At last, you had a mouse that was comfortable to use and actually worked as soon as you plugged it in – a rarity with the 'plug and pray' USB support of the time. Even these gave you problems, however – the pointer would become increasingly unresponsive, and the buttons would stick when they should have clicked.

Today's laser mice are so much better, but I'm not sure technology has always headed in the right direction. At some point, someone decided that two buttons wasn't enough, so mice started arriving with a multitude of clickers, sliders and touch-sensitive surfaces, none of which seem to do anything useful. Seriously, putting a 'back' button where my thumb rests? Did anyone really think that one through? And while I can't stop using the scroll wheel, I hate myself every time. It may aggravate my carpal tunnel, but it's just so damned convenient.

Wireless mice, meanwhile, are a recipe for a disaster. For some reason, people who'd never dream of unplugging a wired mouse don't think twice about

borrowing your wireless equivalent. And then, without fail, they lose the little USB dongle. Even if you keep that safe, the batteries always seem to go on the blink when you're doing something vital, at which point you realise it's 10.30pm and all the shops are shut. I'm sure I'm not the only person who takes the battery out, gives it a shake and puts it back again in the hope that it'll give it another hour of life. Come on, perfidious rodent, you work fine for a year then fail me now?

I've tried Bluetooth mice as well, but I've noticed that these have an unhelpful tendency to fall asleep at a moment's notice then refuse to wake, like a lazy employee who slopes off for a chat around the water cooler if not constantly given things to do.

I hope that one day there will be a replacement. The big, plug-in touchpads aren't as speedy or as accurate, and while touchscreens are fine for running apps, have you ever attempted to edit a Word document or Excel spreadsheet with one? Maybe one day some smart eye-tracking or mind-control device will render the mouse obsolete. Until then, you'll find me craned over my keyboard wailing "will no-one rid me of this miserable mouse?"



✉ Do you agree with Stuart?
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